"ALFONSO the UNLUCKY" By WINSTON CHURCHILL

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

"My Life on the Stage"
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1/-
JULY

The STRAND MAGAZINE

July,
1931

"Set me some quest," said Freddie, "like the knights of old, and see how quick I'll deliver the goods as per your esteemed order."

QUEST

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by TREYER EVANS

HERE are the facts, never previously made public, in the matter of the loss of Frederick Widgeon's top-hat. They were revealed for the first time on a chilly winter afternoon round the smoking-room fire of the Drones Club, where one or two Eggs, together with a sprinkling of Beans and Crumpets, had assembled to slip a couple over the Adam's apple before lunch.

Christmas was approaching, and it had occurred to these young men that what London wanted was bigger and better carol-singers. At present, what you got, a Bean with an eight-inch cigarette-holder pointed out, was a lot of grubby-faced children, with practically no technique or bravura, who went around whining about shepherds watching their what-nots by night in a Clare Market accent which you could cut with a spoon. If, he said, a few of the better element, such as he now saw before him, were to form a gang and take on the job—baritone birds, he meant to say, and blokes who knew something about handling a chest-note—why, then, he meant, you would have something.

The suggestion was well received. It promised noise, and the members of the Drones always welcome a fresh chance of making a noise. Murmurs of approval were heard, and there was a little informal practising.

This revealed a serious hiatus in the line-up.

"We need a tenor," said an Egg.

"That's right," agreed a Crumpet. "Someone to clamber up to the top of the scale and remain there trilling while we are down below doing the rough work."

The Bean reflected.

"How about old Freddie Widgeon?" he asked. "He's a tenor. I heard him once at a bump supper, and he sounded like a cat with tonsilitis. I move that old Freddie be and is approached."

The Crumpet shook his head regretfully.

"You won't get old Freddie."

"Why won't we get old Freddie?"

"Because old Freddie is feeling a bit low just now and in no mood for song."

"Why's he feeling low?"

"He lost his hat last week."

"That's bad. Doesn't he know where?"

"He knows where all right."

"Then why doesn't he go and get it? Hasn't he thought of that?"

The Crumpet hesitated.

Well, as a matter of fact (said the Crumpet), he told me the story in strict confidence and I promised faithfully I wouldn't breathe a word about it to a soul. Still, we're all pals here. It was like this. There was a girl old Freddie was very keen on. I can't remember her name. Jane or

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Laura or Clarice or something. Anyway, be that as it may, Freddie had been oiling round her for quite a while with little, or you might say no, success. And one night, not long ago, as they were putting in a splash of dancing at the Angry Cheese, he tackled her squarely on the subject, not mincing his words.

"Tell me, Jane or Clarice as the name may be," he said, addressing the girl, you understand; "why is it that you spurn a fellow's suit? I can't for the life of me see why you won't consent to marry a chap. It isn't as if I hadn't asked you often enough. Playing fast and loose with a good man's love, is the way I look at it."

And he gazed at her, he tells me, in a way that was partly melting and partly suggestive of the dominant male. And the girl gave one of those light, tinkling laughs and replied:—

"You're such an ass, Freddie."

"How do you mean, an ass?" said Freddie. "Do you mean a silly ass?"

"I mean a goof," said the girl. "A gump. A sap. Your name came up the other day in the course of conversation at home, and mother said you were a vapid and irreflective guffin, totally lacking in character and purpose."

"Oh?" said Freddie. "She did, did she?"

"She did," said the girl. "And while it isn't often that I think along the same lines as mother, there—for once—I consider her to have hit the bull's-eye and rung the bell."

"Indeed?" said Freddie. "Well, let me tell you something. When it comes to discussing brains, your mother, in my opinion, would do better to recede modestly into the background and not try to set herself up as an authority. I strongly suspect her of being the woman who was seen in Charing Cross Station the other day, asking a porter if he could direct her to Charing Cross Station. And, in the second place, I'll show you if I haven't got a character and purpose. Set me some quest," said Freddie, "like the knights of old, and see how quick I'll deliver the goods as per esteemed order."

"How do you mean, a quest?" said the girl.

"Why, bid me do something for you or get something for you or biff somebody in the eye for you. You know the procedure."

So the girl thought a bit, and then she said:—

"All my life I've wanted to eat strawberries in the middle of winter. Get me a basket of strawberries before the end of the month, and we'll take up this matrimonial proposition of yours in a spirit of serious research."

"Strawberries?" said Freddie.

"Strawberries," said the girl.

"Strawberries?" said Freddie.

"Strawberries," said the girl.

"But, I say, dash it!" said Freddie. "*Strawberries?*"

"Strawberries," said the girl.

And then, at last, old Freddie, reading between the lines, saw that what she wanted was strawberries. And how the deuce he was to get any in December was more than he could have told you.

"I could do you oranges," he said.

"Strawberries," repeated the girl firmly. "And you're jolly lucky, my lad, not to be sent off after the Holy Grail or something or told to pluck me a sprig of edelweiss from the top of the Alps. Mind you, I'm not saying Yes and I'm not saying No, but this I will say—that, if you bring me that basket of strawberries in the stated time, I shall know there's more in you than sawdust, and I will reopen your case and examine it thoroughly in the light of the fresh evidence. Whereas, if you fail to deliver the fruit, I shall assume that mother was right, and you can jolly well make up your mind to doing without the society of little Gertrude (or Ramona or Ruth or whatever it was) from now on."

Here she stopped to take aboard a bit of breath, and Freddie, after a lengthy sort of pause, braced himself up and managed to utter a brave laugh. It was a bit roopy, he tells me, if not actually hacking, but he did it.

"Right-ho!" he said. "Right-ho! If that's the way you feel—well, to put it in a nutshell, right-ho!"

POOR old Freddie passed a restless kind of night that night, tossing on the pillow not a little, and feverishly at that. If this girl had been even a shade less attractive, he tells me, he would have sent her a telegram telling her to go to the dickens. But, as it so happened, she wasn't, so the only thing to do was to pull up the old socks and take a stab at the programme as outlined. And he was climbing outside his morning cup of tea when something more or less resembling an idea came to him.

The wise man, he knew, finding himself in a tight place, consults an expert. I mean to say, if some knotty point of the Law has arisen, your knowledgeable bloke will tool off to the nearest tort-and-replevin merchant, plank down his eight-and-six, and put the problem up to him. And, similarly, when it's a matter of collecting strawberries in December, the best plan is to seek out the fellow most pre-eminent in the way of giving expensive parties.

This, Freddie considered, was unquestionably young Oofy Prosser. Thinking back,

"I wonder if by any chance you had strawberries last night?" asked Freddie. Oofy gave a sort of quiver and shut his eyes.

he could recall a dozen occasions when he had met chorus-girls tottering about with a dazed look in their eyes, and when he had asked them what was the matter they had explained that they were merely thinking of the party Oofy Prosser had given last night. If anybody knew how to get strawberries in December, it would be Oofy.

He called, accordingly, at his flat in Devonshire House, and found him in bed, staring at the ceiling and moaning.

"Hullo!" said Freddie. "You look a bit red-eyed, old corpse."

"I feel red-eyed," said Oofy. "And I wish, if it isn't absolutely necessary, that you wouldn't come charging in here early in the morning like this. By about ten o'clock to-night, I imagine, if I take great care of myself and keep quiet, I shall once more be in a position to look at gargoyles without wincing; but at the moment the mere sight of you gives me an indefinable shuddering feeling."

"Did you have a party last night?" asked Freddie.

"I did."

"I wonder if by any chance you had strawberries?"

Oofy gave a sort of quiver and shut his eyes. He seemed to be wrestling with some powerful emotion. Then the spasm passed, and he spoke.

"Don't talk about the beastly things," he said. "I never want to see strawberries again in my life. Nor lobster, caviare, *pâté de foie gras*, prawns in aspic, or anything remotely resembling Bronx cocktails, Martinis, Side-Cars, Lizard's Breaths, All Quiet on the Western Fronts, and any variety of champagne, whisky, brandy, chartreuse, benedictine, and curaçao."

Freddie nodded sympathetically.

"I know just how you feel, old man," he said. "And I hate to have to press the point. But I happen—for purposes which I will not reveal—to require about a dozen strawberries."

"Then go and buy them, blast you," said Oofy, turning his face to the wall.

"*Can* you buy strawberries in December?"

"Certainly. Bellamy's in Piccadilly have them."

"Are they frightfully expensive?" asked Freddie, feeling in his pocket and fingering the one pound two shillings and threepence which had got to last him to the end of the quarter, when his allowance came in. "Do they cost a fearful lot?"

"Of course not. They're dirt cheap."

Freddie heaved a relieved sigh.

"I don't suppose I pay more than a pound apiece, or at most thirty shillings, for mine," said Oofy. "You can get quite a lot for fifty quid."

Freddie uttered a hollow groan.

"Don't gargle," said Oofy. "Or, if you must gargle, gargle outside."

"Fifty quid?" said Freddie.

"Fifty or a hundred, I forget which. My man attends to these things."

FREDDIE looked at him in silence. He was trying to decide whether the moment had arrived to put Oofy into circulation.

In the matter of borrowing money, old Freddie is pretty shrewd. He has vision. At an early date he had come to the conclusion that it would be foolish to fritter away a fellow like Oofy in a series of ten bobs and quids. The prudent man, he felt, when he has an Oofy Prosser on his list, nurses him along till he feels the time is ripe for one of those quick Send-me-two hundred-by-messenger-old-man-or-my-head-goes-in-the-gas-oven touches. For years, accordingly, he had been saving Oofy up for some really big emergency. And the point he had to decide was, would there ever be a bigger emergency than this? That was what he asked himself.

Then it came home to him that Oofy was not in the mood. The way it seemed to Freddie was that, if Oofy's mother had crept to Oofy's bedside at this moment and tried to mace him for as much as five bob, Oofy would have risen and struck her with the bromo-seltzer bottle.

With a soft sigh, therefore, he gave up the idea and oozed out of the room and downstairs into Piccadilly.

Piccadilly looked pretty mouldy to old Freddie. It was full of people and other foul things. He wandered along for a bit in a distrait sort of way, and then suddenly out of the corner of his eye he became aware that he was in the presence of fruit. A shop on the starboard side was full of it, and he discovered that he was standing outside Bellamy's.

And what is more, by Jove, there, nestling in a basket in the middle of a lot of cotton wool and blue paper, was a platoon of strawberries.

And, as he gazed at them, Freddie began to see how this thing could be worked with the miminum of discomfort and the maximum of profit to all concerned. He had just remembered that his uncle Joseph had an account at Bellamy's.

The next moment he had bounded through the door and was in conference with one of the reduced duchesses who do the fruit-slinging at this particular emporium. This one, Freddie tells me, was about six feet high and looked down at

him with large, haughty eyes in a derogatory manner, being, among other things, dressed from stem to stern in black satin. He was conscious of a slight chill, but he carried on according to plan.

" Good morning," he said, switching on a bit of a smile and then switching it off again as he caught her eye. " Do you sell fruit ? "

If she had answered " No," he would, of course, have been stymied. But she didn't. She inclined her head proudly.

" Quate," she said.

" That's fine," said Freddie heartily. " Because fruit happens to be just what I'm after."

" Indade ? "

" I want that basket of strawberries in the window."

" Quate."

She reached for them and started to wrap them up. She didn't seem to enjoy doing it. As she tied the string, her brooding look deepened. Freddie thinks she may have had a great love tragedy in her life.

" Send them to the Earl of Blicester, 66A, Berkeley Square," said Freddie, alluding, in round numbers, to his uncle Joseph.

" Quate."

" On second thoughts," said Freddie, " no, I'll take them with me. Save trouble. Hand them over, and send the bill to Lord Blicester."

This, naturally, was the crux or nub of the whole binge. And to Freddie's concern, he tells me, it didn't seem to have got over so big as he could have wished. But he had hoped for the bright smile, the courteous inclination of the head. Instead of which, the female looked doubtful.

" You desi-ah to remove them in person ? "

" Quate," said Freddie.

" Podden me," said the female, suddenly disappearing.

SHE was not away long. In fact, Freddie, roaming hither and thither about the shop, had barely had time to eat three or four dates and a custard apple when she was among those present once more. And now she was wearing a look of definite disapproval, like a duchess who has found half a caterpillar in the Castle salad.

" His lordship informs me that he desi-ahs no strawberries."

" Eh ? "

" I have been in telephonic communication with his lordship and he states explicitly that he does not desi-ah strawberries."

Freddie gave a bit at the knees, but he came back stoutly.

" Don't you listen to what he says," he urged. " He's always kidding. That's the sort of fellow he is. Just a great big happy schoolboy. Of course he desi-ahs strawberries. He told me so himself. I'm his nephew."

Good stuff, but it didn't seem to be getting over. Freddie caught a glimpse of the female's face, and it was definitely cold and hard and proud. However, he gave a careless laugh, just to show that his heart was in the right place, and grabbed the basket.

" Ha, ha ! " he tittered lightly, and started for the street at something midway between a saunter and a gallop.

And he hadn't more than reached the open spaces when he heard the female give tongue behind him.

" EEEE-EEEE-EEEE-EEEE-EEEEEE-EEEE ! " she said, in substance.

Now, you must remember that all this took place round about the hour of noon, when every fellow is at his lowest and weakest and the need for the twelve o'clock bracer has begun to sap his moral pretty considerably. With a couple of quick cold ones under his vest, old Freddie would, no doubt, have faced the situation and carried it off with an air. He would have raised his eyebrows. He would have been nonchalant. But, coming on him in his reduced condition, this fearful screech unnerved him completely.

The duchess had now begun to cry " Stop thief ! " And old Freddie, instead of keeping his head and leaping carelessly into a passing taxi, made the grave strategic error of picking up his feet with a jerk and starting to leg it along Piccadilly.

Well, naturally, that did him no good at all. Eight hundred people appeared from nowhere, willing hands gripped his collar and the seat of his trousers, and the next thing he knew he was cooling off in Vine Street Police Station.

After that, everything was more or less of a blur. The scene seemed suddenly to change to a police-court, in which he was confronted by a magistrate who looked like an owl with a dash of weasel blood in him.

A dialogue then took place, of which all he recalls is this :—

POLICEMAN : 'Earing cries of " Stop Thief ! " your worship, and observing the accused running very 'earty, I apprehended 'im.

MAGISTRATE : How did he appear, when apprehended ?

POLICEMAN : Very apprehensive, your worship.

MAGISTRATE : You mean he had a sort of pinched look ? (Laughter in court.)

POLICEMAN : It then transpired that 'e 'ad been attempting to purloin strawberries.

MAGISTRATE: He seems to have got the raspberry. (Laughter in court.) Well, what have you to say, young man?

FREDDIE: Oh, ah!

MAGISTRATE: More "owe" than "ah," I fear. (Laughter in court, in which his worship joined.) Ten pounds or fourteen days.

Well, you can see how rotten this must have been for poor old Freddie. Considered purely from the dramatic angle, the Beak had played him right off the stage, hogging all the comedy and getting the sympathy of the audience from the start; and, apart from that, here he was, nearing the end of the quarter, with all his allowance spent except one pound two and threepence, suddenly called upon to regurgitate ten quid or go to the Bastille for a matter of two weeks.

There was only one course before him. He was all against languishing in a dungeon for a solid fortnight, so it was imperative that he raise the cash somewhere. And the only way of raising it that he could think of was to apply to his uncle, old Blicester.

So he sent a messenger round to Berkeley Square, explaining that he was in jail and hoping his uncle was the same, and presently a letter was brought back by the butler, containing ten quid in postal orders, the curse of the Blicesters, a third-class ticket to Blicester Regis in Shropshire, and instructions that as soon as they smote the fetters from his wrists he was to take the first train there and go and stay at Blicester Castle till further notice.

Because at the Castle, his uncle said, in a powerful passage, even a blasted pimply, pop-eyed, good-for-nothing scallywag and nincompoop like Freddie couldn't get into mischief and disgrace the family.

And in this, Freddie tells me, there was a good deal of rugged sense. Blicester Castle, a noble pile, is situated at least half-a-dozen miles from anywhere, and the only time anybody ever succeeded in disgracing the family name, while in residence,

was back in the reign of Edward the Confessor, when the then Earl of Blicester, having lured a bevy of neighbouring landowners into the banqueting hall on the specious pretence of standing them mulled sack, had proceeded to slug one and all with a battleaxe, subsequently cutting their heads off and, in rather loud taste, sticking them on spikes along the outer battlements.

So Freddie tooled down to Blicester Regis and started to camp at the Castle, and it wasn't long, he tells me, before he began to find the time hanging a bit heavy on his hands. For a couple of days he managed to make out all right, occupying himself in carving the girl's initials on the immemorial elms with a heart round them. But on the third morning, having broken his Boy Scout pocket-knife, he felt at a pretty loose end. And to fill in the time he started on a moody stroll through the

Freddie picked up his feet with a jerk and started to leg it along Piccadilly with the basket.

messuages and pleasaunces, feeling a good deal humped.

After mooching hither and thither for awhile, thinking of the girl, he came to a series of hothouses. And, it being beastly cold, with an east wind that went through his plus-fours like a javelin, he thought it wouldn't be an unsound scheme to barge inside where it was warm.

And, scarcely had he got past the door, when he found he was almost entirely surrounded by strawberries. There they were, scores of them, all hot and juicy.

For a moment, Freddie tells me, he had a sort of idea that a miracle had occurred. He seemed to remember a similar thing having happened to the Israelites in the desert, that time when they were all saying to each other how well a spot of manna would go down, and what a dashed shame it was they hadn't any manna, and then suddenly out of a blue sky all the manna they could do with and enough over for breakfast next day——

Well, I mean, that's the way it seemed to Freddie at this point.

Then he remembered that his uncle always opened the Castle for a big binge at Christmas, and these strawberries were, no doubt, intended for Exhibit A at this binge.

Well, after that, of course, everything was simple. A child would have known what to do. Legging it back to the house, old Freddie returned with a cardboard box of sorts and, keeping a keen eye out for the head-gardener, nipped in, selected about two dozen of the finest, jammed them in the box, tooled back to the house again, reached for the Railway Guide, found there was a train leaving for London in an hour, changed into Town clothes, fished out the old top-hat, borrowed the stable-boy's bicycle, breezed for the station, and about four hours later was climbing the front-door steps of this girl Lucille or Mary's house in Eaton Square with the box tucked under his arm.

At least, it wasn't actually tucked under his arm, because he had left it in the train. Except for that, he had carried the thing through without a hitch.

Well, old Freddie, though rattled, had enough sense to see that no useful end was to be gained by punching the bell and rushing into the girl's presence shouting, " See what I've brought you ! "

On the other hand, what to do ? He was feeling a bit unequal to the swirl of events.

Once, he tells me, some years ago, he got lugged into some amateur theatricals, to play a butler ; and his part consisted of the following lines and business :—

(Enter JORKINS, carrying telegram on salver.)

JORKINS : A telegram, m'lady.

(Exit JORKINS),

and on the night in he came, full of beans, and, having said " A telegram, m'lady," extended an empty salver towards the heroine, who, having been expecting on the strength of the telegram to clutch at her heart and say " My God ! " and tear open the envelope and crush it in nervous fingers and fall over in a swoon, was considerably taken aback, not to say nonplussed.

Well, he felt now as he had felt then.

Still, he had enough sense left to see the way out. After a couple of turns up and down the south side of Eaton Square, he came—rather shrewdly—to the conclusion that the only person who could help him in this emergency was Oofy Prosser.

The way Freddie sketched out the scenario in the rough, it all looked pretty plain sailing. He would go to Oofy, whom, as I told you, he had been saving up for years, and with one single impressive gesture get into his ribs for about twenty quid.

He would be losing money on the deal, of course, because he had always had Oofy scheduled for at least fifty. But that couldn't be helped.

Then off to Bellamy's and buy strawberries. He didn't exactly relish the prospect of meeting the black satin female again, but when love is calling these things have to be done.

HE found Oofy at home, and plunged into the agenda without delay.

" Hullo, Oofy, old man ! " he said. " How are you, Oofy, old man ? I say, Oofy, old man, I do like that tie you're wearing. What I call something like a tie. Quite the snappiest thing I've seen for years and years and years and years. I wish I could get ties like that. But then, of course, I haven't your exquisite taste. What I've always said about you, Oofy, old man, and what I always will say, is that you have the most extraordinary flair—it amounts to genius—in the selection of ties. But, then, one must bear in mind that anything would look well on you, because you have such a clean-cut, virile profile. I met a man the other day who said to me, ' I didn't know Ronald Colman was in England.' And I said, ' He isn't.' And he said, ' But I saw you talking to him outside the Blotto Kitten.' And I said, ' That wasn't Ronald Colman. That was my old pal—the best pal any man ever had—Oofy Prosser.' And he said, ' Well, I never saw such a remarkable resemblance.' And I said, ' Yes,

there is a great resemblance, only, of course, Oofy is much the better-looking.' And this fellow said, ' Oofy Prosser ? Is that *the* Oofy Prosser, the man whose name you hear everywhere ? ' And I said, ' Yes, and I'm proud to call him my friend. I don't suppose,' I said, ' there's another fellow in London in such demand. Duchesses clamour for him, and, if you ask a princess to dinner, you have to add " To meet Oofy Prosser," or she won't come. This,' I explained, ' is because, in addition to being the handsomest and best-dressed man in Mayfair, he is famous for his sparkling wit and keen—but always kindly—repartee. And yet, in spite of all, he remains simple, unspoilt, unaffected.' Will you lend me twenty quid, Oofy, old man ? "

" No," said Oofy Prosser.

Freddie paled.

" What did you say ? "

" I said No."

" No ? "

" N-ruddy-o ! " said Oofy, firmly.

Freddie clutched at the mantelpiece.

" But, Oofy, old man, I need the money—need it sorely."

" I don't care."

It seemed to Freddie that the only thing to do was to tell all. Clearing his throat, he started in at the beginning. He sketched the course of his great love in burning words, and brought the story up to the point where the girl had placed her order for strawberries.

" She must be cuckoo," said Oofy.

Freddie was respectful, but firm.

" She isn't cuckoo," he said. " I have felt all along that the incident showed what a spiritual nature she has. I mean to say, reaching out yearningly for the unattainable and all that sort of thing, if you know what I mean. Anyway, the broad, basic point is that she wants strawberries, and I've got to collect enough money to get her them."

" Who is this half-wit ? " asked Oofy.

Freddie told him the girl's name, and Oofy seemed rather impressed.

" I know her." He mused awhile. " Dashed pretty girl."

" Lovely," said Freddie. " What eyes ! "

" Yes."

" What hair ! "

" Yes."

" What a figure ! "

" Yes," said Oofy. " I always think she's one of the prettiest girls in London."

" Absolutely," said Freddie. " Then, on second thoughts, old pal, you will lend me twenty quid to buy her strawberries ? "

" No," said Oofy.

And Freddie couldn't shift him. In the end he gave it up.

" Very well," he said. " Oh, very well. If you won't, you won't. But, Alexander Prosser," proceeded Freddie, with a good deal of dignity, " just let me tell you this. I wouldn't be seen dead in a tie like that beastly thing you're wearing. I don't like your profile. Your hair is getting thin on the top. And I heard a certain prominent Society hostess say the other day that the great drawback to living in London was that a woman couldn't give so much as the simplest luncheon-party without suddenly finding that that appalling man, Prosser—I quote her words—had wriggled out of the woodwork and was in her midst. Prosser, I wish you a very good afternoon ! "

Brave words, of course, but, when you came right down to it, they didn't get him anywhere. After the first thrill of telling Oofy what he thought of him had died away, Freddie realized that he was more up against it than ever. Where was he to look for aid and comfort ? He had friends, of course, but the best of them wasn't good for more than an occasional drink or possibly a couple of quid, and what use was that to a man who needed at least a dozen strawberries at a pound apiece ?

PRETTY bleak the world looked to poor old Freddie, and he was in sombre mood, he tells me, as he wandered along Piccadilly.

Where money was concerned, he perceived, merit counted for nothing. Money was too apt to be collared by some rotten bounder or bounders, while the good and deserving man was left standing on the outside, looking in. The sight of all those expensive cars rolling along, crammed to the bulwarks with overfed males and females with fur coats and double chins, made him feel, he tells me, that he wanted to buy a red tie and a couple of bombs and start the Social Revolution. If Stalin had come along at that moment, Freddie would have shaken him by the hand.

Well, there's only one thing for a fellow to do when he feels like that. Freddie hurried along to the club and absorbed a skinful.

It worked, as it always does. Gradually the stern, censorious mood passed, and he began to feel an optimistic glow. As the revivers slid over the larynx, he saw that all was not lost. He perceived that he had been leaving out of his reckoning that sweet, angelic pity which is such a characteristic of woman.

Take the case of a knight of old, he meant to say. Do you suppose that if a knight of old had been sent off by a damsel on some fearfully tricky quest and had gone through all sorts of perils and privations for her sake, facing dragons in black satin and going

to chokey and what not, the girl would have given him the bird when he got back, simply because—looking at the matter from a severely technical standpoint—he had failed to bring home the bacon ?

Absolutely not, Freddie considered. She would have been most awfully braced with him for putting up such a good show and would have comforted and cosseted him.

This girl Muriel or Flora, he felt, was bound to do the same, so obviously the move now was to toddle along to Eaton Square again and explain matters to her. So he gave his hat a brush, flicked a spot of dust from his coat-sleeve, and shot off in a taxi.

All during the drive he was rehearsing what he would say to her, and it sounded pretty good to him. In his mind's eye he could see the tears coming into her gentle eyes as he told her about the Arm of the Law gripping his trouser-seat. But when he arrived a hitch occurred. There was a stage wait. The butler at Eaton Square told him the girl was dressing.

" Say that Mr. Widgeon has called," said Freddie.

So the butler went upstairs, and presently from aloft there came the clear, penetrating voice of his loved one telling the butler to bung Mr. Widgeon into the drawing-room and lock up all the silver.

And Freddie went into the drawing-room and settled down to wait.

It was one of those drawing-rooms where there isn't a frightful lot to entertain and amuse. Freddie got a good laugh out of a photograph of the girl's late father on the mantelpiece—a heavily whiskered bird, who reminded him of a burst horsehair sofa ; but the rest of the appointments were on the dull side. They consisted of an album of Views of Italy and a copy of " Indian Love Lyrics," bound in limp cloth ; and it wasn't long before he began to feel a bit hipped.

He polished his shoes with one of the sofa-cushions, and took his hat from the table where he had dumped it and gave it another brush ; but after that there seemed to be nothing in the way of intellectual occupation, so he just leaned back in a chair and unhinged his lower jaw and let it droop and sank into a sort of coma. And it was while he was still in this trance that he was rather bucked to hear a dog-fight in progress in the street. He went to the window and looked out, but the thing was apparently taking place somewhere near the front door, and the top of the porch hid it from him.

Now, old Freddie hated to miss a dog-fight. Many of his happiest hours had been spent at dog-fights. And this one appeared

Finding Freddie in the messenger-boy mistook him parcel into

from the sound of it to be on a more or less major scale. He charged down the stairs and opened the front door.

As his trained senses had told him, the encounter was being staged at the foot of the steps. He stood in the open doorway and drank it in. He had always maintained that you got the best dog-fights down in the Eaton Square neighbourhood, because there tough animals from the King's Road, Chelsea, district were apt to wander in—dogs who had trained on gin and flat-irons at the local public-houses and could be relied on to give of their best.

The present scrap bore out this view. It was between a sort of *consommé* of mastiff and Irish terrier, on the one hand, and, on

doorway without a hat, the for the butler, and shoved the his hand.

the other, a long-haired *macédoine* of about seven breeds of dog who had an indescribable raffish look, as if he had been mixing with the artist colony down by the river. For about five minutes it was as good a go as you could have wished to see; but at the end of that time it stopped suddenly, both principals simultaneously spotting a cat at an area gate down the road and shaking hands hastily and woofing after her.

Freddie was a bit disappointed, but it was no use repining. He started to go back into the house and was just closing the front door, when a messenger-boy appeared, carrying a parcel.

"Sign, please," said the messenger-boy.

You see, naturally, finding Freddie standing in the doorway without a hat, he had mistaken him for the butler. He shoved the parcel into his hand, made him sign a yellow paper, and biffed off, leaving Freddie with the goods.

And Freddie, glancing at the parcel, saw that it was addressed to the girl.

But it wasn't this that made him reel where he stood. What made him reel where he stood was the fact that on the paper outside the thing was a label with "Bellamy and Co., Bespoke Fruitists," on it. And he was dashed, prodding it, if there wasn't some squashy substance inside which certainly wasn't apples, oranges, nuts, bananas, or anything of that species.

Freddie unhooked the old beak and gave a good hard sniff at the parcel. And, having done so, he reeled where he stood once more.

I don't know if any of you fellows recollect, when at school, reading a bit of poetry by a fellow whose name has escaped my memory, dealing with a bird called Cortez, who discovered the Pacific, if I recall the ocean rightly, and took a look at it and whistled a bit, and his pals took a look at it, and then they all looked at one another and were, generally speaking, pretty well steamed up about the whole thing. Well, if Freddie had had anybody there to look at, he would have looked at him just as those fellows looked at one another.

Because a frightful suspicion had shot through him.

It wasn't that old Freddie was anything particularly hot in the detective line. You wouldn't have found him deducing anything much from footprints or cigar-ash. In fact, if this parcel had contained cigar-ash, it would have meant nothing to him. But in the circs anybody would have been suspicious.

I mean to say, consider the facts. His sniff had told him that beneath the outward wrapping of paper lay strawberries. And the only person besides himself who knew that the girl wanted strawberries was Oofy Prosser. About the only bloke in London able to buy strawberries at that time of year was Oofy. And Oofy's manner, he recalled, when they were talking about the girl's beauty and physique generally, had been furtive and sinister.

To rip open the paper, therefore, and take a look at the enclosed card was with Frederick Widgeon the work of a moment.

And, sure enough, it was as he had foreseen. "Alexander C. Prosser" was the name on the card, and Freddie tells me he wouldn't be a bit surprised if the C. didn't stand for "Clarence."

His first feeling, he tells me, as he stood there staring at that card, was one of righteous indignation at the thought that any such treacherous, double-crossing hound as Oofy Prosser should have been permitted to pollute the air of London, W.1, all these years. To refuse a fellow twenty quid with one hand and then to go and send his girl strawberries with the other struck old Freddie as about as low-down a bit of hornswoggling as you could want.

He burned with honest wrath. And he was still burning when the last cocktail he had had at the club, which had been lying low inside him all this while, suddenly came to life and got action. Quite unexpectedly, Freddie tells me, it began to frisk about like a young lamb, until it leaped into his head and gave him the idea of a lifetime.

What, he asked himself, was the matter with suppressing this card, freezing on to the berries, and presenting them to the girl with a modest flourish as coming from F. Widgeon, Esq. ?

He quivered all over with joy and elation and what not. Standing there in the hall, he felt that there was a Providence, after all, which kept an eye on good men and saw to it that they came out on top in the end. In fact, he felt so dashed fit and bobbish that he burst into song. And he hadn't got much beyond the first high note when he heard the girl giving tongue from upstairs.

"Stop it!" said the girl.

"What did you say?" said Freddie.

"I said 'Stop it!' The cat's downstairs with a headache, trying to rest."

"I say," said Freddie, "are you going to be long?"

"How do you mean, long?"

"Long, dressing. Because I've something I want to show you."

"What?"

"Oh, nothing much," said Freddie, carelessly. "Nothing particular. Just a few assorted strawberries."

"Eek!" said the girl. "You don't mean you've really got them?"

"Got them?" said Freddie. "Didn't I say I would?"

"I'll be down in just one minute," said the girl.

WELL, you know what girls are. The minute stretched into five minutes, and the five minutes into a quarter of an hour, and old Freddie made the tour of the drawing-room and looked at the photograph of her late father and picked up the album of Views of Italy and opened "Indian Love Lyrics" at page forty-three and shut it again and took up the cushion and gave his shoes another rub and brushed his hat once more, and still she didn't come.

And so, by way of something else to do, he started brooding on the strawberries for a bit.

Considered purely as strawberries, he tells me, they were a pretty rickety collection, not to say spavined. They were an unhealthy whitish-pink in colour and looked as if they had just come through a lingering illness which had involved a good deal of blood-letting by means of leeches.

"They don't look much," said old Freddie to himself.

Not that it really mattered, of course, because all the girl had told him to do was to get her strawberries, and nobody could deny that these were strawberries. C3 though they might be, they were genuine strawberries, and from that fact there was no getting away.

Still, he didn't want the dear little soul to be disappointed.

"I wonder if they have any flavour at all?" said old Freddie to himself.

Well, the first one hadn't. Nor had the second. The third was rather better. And the fourth was quite juicy. And the best of the lot, oddly enough, was the last one in the basket.

He was just finishing it when the girl came bounding in.

Well, old Freddie tried to pass it off, of course. But there wasn't much doing. In fact, he tells me he didn't get beyond a sort of tentative "Oh, I say——" And the upshot and outcome of the thing was that the girl bunged him out into the winter evening without so much as giving him a chance to take his hat.

So there the hat is, in Eaton Square, and he hasn't the nerve to go back and fetch it, because the girl stated specifically that if he dared to show his ugly face there again the butler had instructions to knock him down and skin him, and the butler was looking forward to it, as he had never liked Freddie.

The whole thing has been a great blow to the poor old chap, and I honestly don't think you can count on him to come and sing carols, because he's feeling a bit low.

ALFONSO THE UNLUCKY

By

The Right Hon.
WINSTON CHURCHILL
P.C.

TO be born a King; never to have been anything else but a King; to have reigned for forty-six years and then to be dethroned! To begin life again in middle age under novel and contracted conditions with a status and habit of mind never before experienced, barred from the one profession to which a lifetime has been devoted! Surely a harsh destiny. To have given his best, to have faced every peril and anxiety, to have accomplished great things, to have presided over his country during all the perils of the twentieth century; to have seen it grow in prosperity and reputation; and then to be violently rejected by the nation of whom he was so proud, of whose tradition and history he was the embodiment, whom he had sought to represent in all the finest actions of his life—surely enough to try the soul of mortal man.

The vicissitudes of politicians bear no relation to such a trial. Politicians rise by toils and struggles; they expect to fall; they hope to rise again. Nearly always, in or out of office, they are surrounded and sustained by great parties. They have many companions in misfortune. Their work with all its interest and variety continues. They know they are but the creatures of the day. There is no personal humiliation in their defeats. They hold no golden casket enshrining the treasure of centuries to be shattered irretrievably

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in their hands. They are ready to take the rough with the smooth along the path of life they have chosen for themselves. Yet even they suffer some pangs. Mr. Birrell, wit and sage, was thrown out of office in 1916 by the events of the Dublin rebellion, and later in the same year his Chief, Mr. Asquith, fell beneath the pressures of the Great War. Said Birrell as he contemplated this latter event: "It must be very painful to him. Even I, who only fell off a donkey (*i.e.*, the Irish Chief Secretaryship), did not like it at all: but Asquith has fallen off an elephant in the face of the whole British Empire." But to be a King and then to be deposed—that is an experience incomparably more poignant.

King Alfonso in the uniform of a Spanish admiral.

Alfonso XIII. was a posthumous child. His cradle was a throne. For a while during his mother's regency philatelists delighted in Spanish stamps which bore the image of a baby. Later came the cherubic lineaments of a child; later still, the countenance of youth; and finally, the head of a man. A severe upbringing: governesses, tutors, a Queen-Mother drilled him in the kingly profession. Very exacting is the education of princes. Scholastic, religious, and military discipline converge to grip the boy. Teachers, bishops, and generals stand over every hour and every path of the youthful life. All inculcate the sense of majesty; all emphasize the idea of duty; all ingeminate decorum. Real kings have a unique point of view. Not even the most eminent of their subjects has the same association with the life of the whole people. Lifted far above party and faction, they personify the spirit of the State. But that anyone so reared and trained, so surfeited with honour, should grow to be a practical, genial man of the world with a noble air, but without a scrap of conceit, proves that he was endowed at birth with an attractive nature.

A delicate princeling brought up without the roughening of public-school training, Alfonso steeled his character and his physique by a life in the open air. His childhood of conscious regality would have spoiled

most boys; but he sought to be a swimmer, a horseman, and a climber. He first practised mountaineering by climbing up the sides of the palace at Miramar. Alert, wiry, and keyed to constant keenness, his mind and his body corresponded to each other. He has never been soft or luxurious; his pleasures have been those of a man, and his bearing always the bearing of a King. His devotion to polo certainly changed the Spanish cavalry officer. It is difficult to imagine the Spanish Army without his leadership.

Alfonso had scarcely reached manhood when a teacher called Danger added his lessons to the Royal curriculum. In the dark underworld of Spanish politics, there are many secret societies to whom the bomb and the pistol present themselves with a hideous melodramatic attraction. Everyone remembers the tragedy that marred and nearly obliterated the Royal wedding day. The long, splendid procession, the gay, joyous crowds, the young King and the beautiful English Princess who had become his bride, in their coach of State, the dark furtive figure peering from the upper window, the small packet of monstrous power, the shattering explosion, the street a shambles, scores of men and women writhing in their blood, or smitten into death; the consternation and panic around the grisly scene; the King, calm, cold as steel, helping his bride to descend from the shattered vehicle, hiding from her eyes the awful spectacles around; the bright scarlet uniforms of the detachment of the Royal Dragoons sent from England in her honour, as they thrust themselves forward to be of aid—the whole scene is stamped in the memory of the generation in which it occurred.

But that was not to be the end of the day. The head of the procession had already reached the Palace. What had happened to delay the King and Queen? Presently the truth was known; and soon after the Royal couple arrived stained with blood, but uninjured, and proceeded inflexibly with the appointed ceremonial. It was not enough to appear at the Palace windows to reassure the anxious crowd. The King must take an open motor-car and drive out unguarded and almost alone among the multitude of his subjects, to receive their tributes of loyalty and thankfulness that he had been delivered from an appalling peril. This was the spirit which was to

Photo: Central News.

The Queen of Spain and her children.

animate his bearing in all times of danger.

I first had the honour of meeting him when I visited Madrid in the spring of 1914. He bade me to luncheon, and afterwards he talked with great freedom and intimacy in a small cabinet near by. One day he asked me to go for a drive with him in his motor-car, and we made a long excursion towards the Escurial. Here the conversation turned on the anxious state of Europe. Presently the King said, abruptly :—

"Mr. Churchill, do you believe in the European War ? "

I replied, "Sir, sometimes I do ; sometimes I don't."

"That is exactly how I feel," he said. We discussed the various possibilities with which the future seemed loaded. His deep regard for England was evident in everything he said. Although nearly twenty years had passed since I had accompanied the Spanish forces in Cuba, he presented me with the war medal for that campaign before I left Madrid.

No one could be surprised that Spain preserved a strict neutrality in the great struggle of Armageddon. The historical barriers between Spain and the allied and associated Powers were not to be surmounted. The deepest bitter memory of the Spaniard is the Napoleonic invasion and the agony of the Peninsular War. Even after a hundred years there could be no unity of sentiment between France and Spain. Gibraltar, though a faded cause of irritation, still plays a part in Spanish thought ; but the real hatred was for the United States, and the final loss of the last remnants of the Spanish colonial empire left an aching void in the breasts of a proud race. The aristocracy were pro-German. The

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A previous attempt to found a Spanish Republic — revolutionaries of 1873 posting up a republican proclamation below a notice ironically worded : "Stick No Bills."

An early portrait of King Alfonso, in field uniform, when in command of his forces in Morocco.

middle classes anti-French. As the King said : " Only I and the mob are for the Allies." The best that could be hoped was that Spain should be neutral in the struggle ; and certainly she prospered by her abstention.

The King told me of the other attempts upon his life. One in particular I remember. He was riding back from a parade when an assassin suddenly sprang in front of his horse and presented a revolver at barely a yard's distance. " Polo comes in very handy," said the King, " on these occasions. I set my horse's head straight at him and rode into him as he fired." Thus he escaped. In all, there were five actual attempts, and many abortive plots.

The acquaintance I made in 1914 with him has been renewed on his many visits to England, and always he has made me feel a sense of his vigilant care for the interest of his country, and his earnest desire for the welfare and progress of its people.

The autograph of King Alfonso is a truly remarkable symbol. Experts in handwriting profess to find in it deep resources of firmness and design ; it certainly possesses style. Yet few Sovereigns can ever have been less pompous. The gloomy, solemn etiquette of the Spanish Court has in its late master produced a modern democratic man of the world, moving easily and naturally in every kind of society. To separate the King from the man, and public functions from the pleasures of private life, was always his wish and his habit. It has been observed that this prince, the head of all the grandees of Spain, was himself the most often photographed in polo kit, flannels, or unconventional garb. The man and the scene were rich in contrasts.

Nothing used to rob the King of his natural gaiety and high spirits. The long years of ceremonial, the cares of State, the perils which beset him, have left untouched that fountain of almost boyish merriment and jollity. His conversation, grave or gay, is pervaded by a natural charm and lighted by a twinkling eye. King or no King, no one could wish for a more agreeable companion. He has a great liking for England and English ways. Certainly no figure could be less tragic, more seemingly care-free than the astute statesman, harassed monarch,

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The Queen's farewell. Her Majesty bidding good-bye to weeping loyalists at a lonely spot near the Escurial, the grim mausoleum of the Spanish kings, before she boarded the train which was to carry her into exile.

and hunted man. There was recalled to my memory as I watched him, the officers home on leave from the trenches of Flanders, happy in the family circle, dancing joyously at ball or cabaret, laughing at the comedies and the music-halls, without apparently a trace upon them of the toils and perils from which they had come but yesterday, and to which they would return to-morrow.

The troubles in Spain had their origin in the breakdown of the Parliamentary system through its lack of contact with realities and with the public will. Parties artificially disciplined and divided produced a long succession of weak Governments

containing few, if any, statesmen capable of bearing a real responsibility or wielding power adequate to the occasion. The long desultory warfare in Morocco—the legacy of centuries—gnawed away at Spanish contentment like an ulcer, with stabbing pains of disaster from time to time.

There was not among Spanish politicians that strict convention which is a bond of honour in all parties in Great Britain, to shield the Crown from all unpopularity or blame. Cabinets and Ministers fell like houses of cards, and gladly left the King to bear their burdens. He did so without demur.

Meanwhile, the war with the Moors dawdled on and the public grievance grew. It grew even in spite of the riches and prosperity which neutrality in the great struggle had brought to Spain. The obstinate, strong, and intractable forces of the Church and Army, and the almost independent institution of the Artillery Corps, confronted Alfonso with another series of problems of the most perplexing character, which acted and were reacted upon by the sterile confusion of the Parliamentary machine.

Only very great patience, skill, and knowledge of the Spanish character, and of the factors at work, enabled him to tread his way through the kind of situation which Mr. Bernard Shaw has illuminated for modern eyes in the witty scenes and dialogue of the "Apple Cart." Our Fabian dramatist and philosopher has rendered a service to monarchy which never perhaps could have been rendered from any other quarter. With his unsparing derision he has held up before the Socialists of every land the weaknesses, the meannesses, the vanities, and the follies of the trumpery figures who float upwards and are borne forward upon the swirls and eddies of so-called democratic politics. The sympathies of the modern world, including many of its advanced thinkers, are powerfully attracted by the gay and sparkling presentation of a King, ill-used, let-down, manipulated for personal and party ends, yet sure of his value to the mass of his subjects, and striving not unsuccessfully to preserve their permanent interest and to discharge his duty.

How does Alfonso XIII. stand as a King, and how does he stand as a man? These are the questions which we must ask when a reign of thirty years of conscious power has come to

By permission of "The Graphic."

King Alfonso, wearing the care-free smile of happier days, driving with his Queen in the pomp and splendour of a State occasion.

its close. The end was bitter. Almost friendless, almost alone in the old palace of Madrid, surrounded by hostile multitudes, King Alfonso knew he had to go. An epoch had closed. Are we to judge him as a despotic statesman, or as a limited constitutional Sovereign? Was he in fact the real ruler of one of the strongest and oldest branches of the European family for nearly thirty years? Or was he merely an engaging polo-playing sportsman, who happened to be a King, wore his royal dignities with easy grace, and looked for Ministers, Parliamentary or extra-Parliamentary, to carry him pleasantly forward from year to year? Did he think for Spain, or did he think for himself? Or did he merely enjoy the pleasures of life without thinking too much about anything at all? Did he govern or reign? Are we dealing with the annals of a nation or with the biography of an individual?

History alone can give decisive answers to the questions. But we shall not shrink from pronouncing, now, that Alfonso XIII. was a cool, determined politician who used continuously and to the full the whole influence of his kingly office to control the policy and fortunes of his country. He deemed himself superior, not alone in rank, but in capacity and experience, to the Ministers he employed. He felt himself to be the one strong, unmoving pivot around which the life of Spain revolved. His sole object was the strength and fame of his country. He could not conceive the dawn of a day when he would cease to be in his own person identified with Spain. He took, at every stage, all the necessary and possible steps of which he could be aware to secure and preserve his control of the destiny of his country, and used his great powers and discharged his high trust with much worldly wisdom and with dauntless courage. It is, therefore, as a statesman and as a ruler, and not as a constitutional monarch acting usually upon the advice of Ministers, that he would wish to be judged, and that history will judge him. He need not shrink from the trial. He has, as he said, a good conscience.

THE municipal elections were a revelation to the King. All his life he had been pursued by conspirators and assassins; but all his life he had freely confided himself to the goodwill of his people. He had never hesitated to mingle in crowds or travel alone unguarded where he listed. He had found many friends in every walk of life, and always, when recognized, ovations and respect. He therefore felt sure that he had behind him the steady loyalty of the nation; and having laboured continually and faithfully in their service, he felt he had deserved their affection. A lightning flash lit up the darkened scene. He saw around him on every side widespread, general, and, it seemed, almost universal hostility. He gave vent to one of those arresting utterances, wrung from him in this memorable period, which show the force and quality of his comprehension of life: "I feel as if I had gone to call upon an old friend, and found that he was dead." It was indeed a withering episode. Explain it as you will; the hard times all over the world, the political incapacity of the Monarchist party, the drift of the times, the propaganda of Moscow—it was without disguise a gesture of repulsion, piercing to the heart.

Everyone has been struck by the contrast between the fierce, sullen aversion of the Spanish people for their King and his immense popularity in the great democracies of France and England. At home, all scowls; abroad, all smiles! Sovereigns accused of despotism and driven from their thrones have been wont to receive asylum in foreign lands; but never

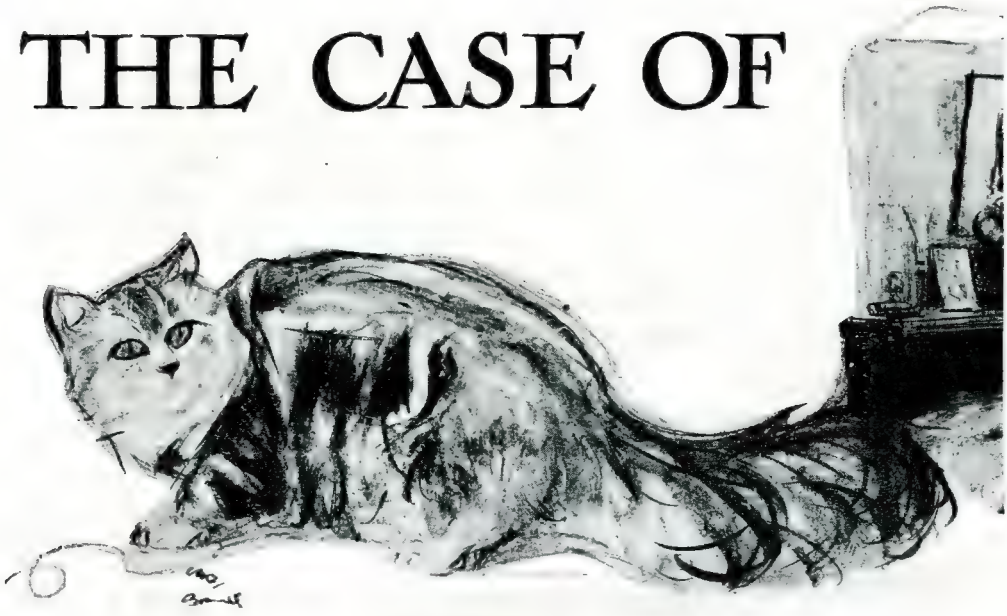
before have they been welcomed with widespread, spontaneous demonstrations of regard and approval among all classes. How shall we explain it? The Spaniards, to whom democratic institutions carry with them the hope of some great new advance and amelioration, regard Alfonso as an obstacle to their progress. The British and French democracies, who already enjoy all these advantages, are disillusioned. They regarded the King as a sportsman; the Spaniards knew him as a ruler. The articulate forces in France and Britain were more attracted by the character and personality of King Alfonso than by the character and personality of the Spanish people. They were surprised that that nation had not liked such a Sovereign. The Spanish people had a view of their own; and that is the view that must prevail. Alfonso would not wish it otherwise himself.

MEN and kings must be judged in the testing moments of their lives. Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities. Courage, physical and moral, King Alfonso has proved on every occasion of personal danger or political stress. Many years ago, in the face of a difficult situation, Alfonso made the proud declaration, no easy boast in Spain: "I was born on the throne; I shall die on it." That this was an intense personal resolve and rule of conduct cannot be doubted. He has been forced to abandon it, and to-day, in his prime, he is an exile. But it should not be supposed that this decision, the most painful of his life, was taken only at the last moment, or under immediate duress. For more than a year past he had let it be known that as King he would not oppose the settled will of the Spanish people, constitutionally expressed, upon the question of republic or monarchy. If the General Election throughout Spain, by a large majority, had produced a strongly republican Cortes, it was understood on all sides that a Constituent Assembly would have come into being. Then, in the most formal manner, the King would have laid down his powers and placed himself at the disposal of the Government desired by his former subjects. It was not to be. The actual crisis came suddenly, unexpectedly, upon a false issue, as the result of mere municipal elections, into which the fundamental questions ought never to have entered —elections, moreover, at which forces favourable to the monarchy had made no preparation for effectual action.

The crisis came attended by every circumstance of violence and affront. By his bearing throughout this odious ordeal, King Alfonso proved that he rated the welfare of his country far above his personal sentiments or pride, and even more above his interests. The issue was unfair; the procedure injurious. The means of armed resistance were not lacking; but the King felt that the cause had become too personal to himself to justify the shedding of Spanish blood by Spanish hands. He was himself the first to raise in the palace the cry of "Long live Spain." He has since achieved another remarkable pronouncement. "I hope I shall not go back, for that will only mean that the Spanish people are not prosperous and happy." Such declarations provide us with the means of judging the spirit of his reign.

He made mistakes; he made, perhaps, as many mistakes as the Royal or Parliamentary rulers of other great countries; he was as unsuccessful as most of them have been in satisfying the vague urges of this modern age. But we see that the spirit which has animated him through all these long years of difficulty has been one of faithful service to his country, and governed always by love and respect for his people.

THE CASE OF MRS MENCKEN



By H. de VERE STACPOOLE

"YOU can't thrash a woman or a cat—to any advantage," said he, "nor get the better of them—a man can't."

"I've never tried," said I.

"Well, never do."

The smoke-room bar attendant came along the deck with our drinks, and Crashman's basket chair creaked as he turned heavily in it to take his glass from the tray. The chair seemed to agree in an undecided sort of manner with what he had just said about cats and women.

He was a great heavy man with hairy backs to his hands; a strong, silent man of the Empire-builder type, coming up from the East, where I understood he had been doing repairs to a frontier on an island or something.

We had been talking about women, winked at by the light of Cape St. Vincent, behind which, under the stars of the summer night, one fancied all Portugal playing guitars and climbing rose-twined balconies—not after cats.

It was, in fact, a night for Love. The *Ludiana* was doing her fifteen knots with scarcely a roll to the beam sea; the ship's band on the port deck, where an awning had been rigged, was tuning up for a dance, and there were lots of pretty girls on board. I am fond of dancing, yet I was held; the

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"Next moment she was up and her arms were round me. 'Don't you know I've a wife?' I cried."

Illustrated by LEO BATES

night was young, and when one of your strong, silent men begins to talk, as Crashman had been talking, it is often worth while to listen.

"One might fancy you were speaking from experience," I said.

"I am," he replied. "Listen. I'd just as soon talk of this matter to an ordinary person as I would wash a dirty shirt in the courtyard of the Savoy—but you're different—because you may be able to help me. I'll tell you how when I have done."

II.

MR. CRASHMAN'S STORY.

"I was married fifteen years ago," said Mr. Crashman. "I'd known her five years before that. She came out to Burma to marry me. We were happy. After the first foolery of love is over comes the strain, and if there isn't affection to meet it, comes the break, pretty often.

"Affection is quite a different thing from love, it hasn't anything to do with sex.

"Mrs. Mencken was something like that picture of Mona Lisa without the grin."

I've known an old horse and an old donkey, put out to grass to end their days, couldn't bear to be parted from one another; that's the sort of thing that holds in married life and takes the rub of servant worries and so forth without parting.

"If you ever want to try out a wife and see what sort of stuff is in her, take her out East and start her in a bungalow, and see what prickly heat and native servants will do—there are other things besides: eighteen-inch centipedes, scorpions that love to make nests in hat-boxes, snakes, white ants—but you know the lot.

"My wife—Jane, I will call her for short—never grumbled even when she caught Piroli, our first curse in the form of a cook, using an old turban for a pudding cloth. Hurricanes didn't bother her, and as she began so she went on—and so she went on for twelve years.

"There was just one thing that threatened to come between us, or rather I should say it tried to threaten, for I was proof against it, and that one thing was the fact that she tended to be jealous of other women—where I was concerned.

"If I'd been a gay Lothario or even one of those common flirtatious asses you meet every day, the thing would have split us apart in no time, but I'm built different. I'm not a woman-hater; I can enjoy the sight of a pretty girl nicely dressed, but, honest to God, women bore me to distraction. It's my fault, not theirs, and the funny thing is that women, somehow, seem to like me, though what they can see in a damn' gorilla like myself, just Providence only knows.

"Jane fitted my mind; she never bored me, there was something in her make-up that made her as companionable as a pipe; she wasn't good-looking, she was just Jane, and that, I suppose, was why I married her and why I was happy in my marriage.

"And then she showed this jealousy business, which tickled me to death when I found it out. She never said a word on any occasion, but her manner told me everything. If she had only spoken I'd have told her straight out not to make a fool of herself, but she didn't, and things jogged along till three years ago, when we went to live for awhile at Weltevreden.

"Weltevreden is Dutch. It's a suburb of old Batavia, and all the best Dutch people live there.

"I went on a political job to do with rubber planting, and I was accredited to Mynheer Claes, one of the top men, and we were very well received.

"The Dutch are most hospitable in a heavy way, and we were always out dining and so forth and finding no difficulty with the language, for the Dutch nearly all talk English—or French.

"At one of these dinner parties we met a lady, a Mrs. Mencken. She was English, but had been married to a foreigner, who was presumably dead, for he never turned up, and she was a queer-looking woman.

"You know that beastly picture of Mona Lisa? She was something like that, without the grin; a wisp of a woman, all eyes and nerves, and the funny thing was that at that dinner party I scarcely noticed this woman; I was talking all the time to a great bubble-faced Dutch girl and finding her horribly funny, for she was fresh out from school in England and someone had been teaching her English swear words, which she repeated like

a parrot for fun, and to show what she knew of English slang—you can fancy!

"Once, looking up, I met the eyes of Mrs. Mencken.

"When we went to the drawing-room after our cigars we found the coffee table spread, Dutch fashion, and there, in a corner, I saw my wife and the Mencken woman chatting away thick as thieves.

"When we got home that night my wife just said, 'You and that Bloom girl' (Bloom was the name of the bubble-faced filly) 'seemed to be enjoying yourselves greatly at dinner.'

"'Should think so,' said I. 'She asked me didn't I think Batavia a blasted hole'; then I explained, but she wasn't listening, and then she butted in about the Mencken woman.

"She was greatly struck with Mrs. M. Mrs. M. was a sweet little thing, and her life seemed to have been so sad. 'You can see it in her eyes,' said Jane. 'More like dyspepsia,' said I. 'Her eyes have dark rings round them; sort of woman that drugs, I should think.'

"'That's a thing one oughtn't to say about anyone,' said she, and she was right, and I said I was sorry, and we went to bed and I thought the thing buried.

III.

"WE had hired a bungalow in Hooft Avenue, and had taken on the servants, a Chinese cook and two Java boys, right good servants they were, too, so we had no difficulty in entertaining, and one of the first people we entertained was Mrs. M.

"She came to tea, and I was very civil to her, though I didn't care for her. I felt rather a cad for what I had said about drugs, so that's why I was extra civil, I suppose. Anyhow, I talked a good deal to her, and when everyone was gone, Jane said to me, 'I'm so glad you were nice to little Mrs. Mencken.'

"'Why, good heavens,' I said, 'when am I nasty to people?'

"'It's not that,' said she, 'but it's just I'm glad you made her feel at home. The Dutch are very nice in their way, but it's good for English people to cling together—don't you think?'

"The idea of clinging to Mrs. Mencken had never occurred to me, and I said so, and Jane laughed and called me an idiot—and that was that.

"Not the slightest trace of jealousy in the case of Mrs. M. Funny, wasn't it? For Mrs. M. was a lot better-looking than some of the women Jane had turned up her nose at. Fact was, she had got round to the soft side of Jane, and had palled up with her and blinded her.

"At the end of a month she was no longer Mrs. Mencken, but Elise—that was her name, Elise.

"She used to drop in to see us when she liked, and Jane used to drop in to see her at the hotel where she was staying. They swapped yarns about past servants, and so on, and they employed the same dressmaker, a cheap dressmaker one of them had discovered in Weltevreden, giving news of the find to the other, same as crows do when

"Jane fitted my mind; she never bored me; there was something in her make-up that made her as companionable as a pipe."

they find a carcass; regular pals they'd become; not that I minded or bothered, till one day at the club, which I'd been made an honorary member of, Bob Sellers, the tobacco man, blew in, and Mrs. M.'s name being mentioned by chance, he dropped the cards out of his hand and nearly upset his drink.

"'What's wrong with her?' I asked.

"'What's wrong with the tobacco blight?' said he. 'Nothing, as far as I know; it's doing its work splendidly—same with her. Keep her out of your house at any cost, if you don't want trouble—she's a double-ended vamp—— What's trumps?'

"He wouldn't give details, but I gathered that her speciality was married couples—that is to say, married men, and that left me unmoved, same as a smallpox scare leaves a man who has just been vaccinated.

IV.

"WE came to England two months later, Jane delaying our departure for a week so that we might travel on the same ship as Elise, who was also going home.

"It was the *Grotius*, a small ship but a good sea boat, and very comfortable.

"Jane had brought the cat, a Persian she'd bought in Burma, and toted along to Weltevreden. It travelled in a wicker cage; the Mencken woman looked after it when Jane was seasick, and fed it and fondled it and carried it about on deck, holding it up sometimes for me to look at. I don't like cats, not Persians, anyhow, all eyes and nerves and claws; and the cat in her arms increased the dislike I was beginning to have for Elise.

"It had come into my mind that she was trying the vamping business on me, and before we reached Southampton I knew, sure enough, that she was.

"I didn't care, personally. What worried me was the notion that got hold of Jane.

"Jane had been jolly good to this woman, stood her all sorts of treats, and, at the South-Western Hotel at Southampton, where we stayed for a day or two after arrival, she asked her to stay as our guest before going on to London.

"I said to Jane: 'Look here, I want to say something. I think you ought to be careful with that woman.'

"'What woman?' she said, knowing quite well who I meant.

"'Mrs. Mencken,' said I.

"'You mean Elise,' said she. 'And why ought I to be careful about her?'

"'Well, there was a man in the club at Weltevreden,' said I, 'and he told me she was a woman to be careful of; in fact, not to let her into my house.'

"Jane thought for a moment. Then she said:—

"'Why didn't you tell me that then?'

"See how she had me? I hadn't told her simply because the vamping business hadn't begun at Weltevreden, and I didn't know the woman's character for certain then.

"'I didn't want to make mischief,' said I, for, of course, I couldn't tell her the whole truth."

"Why not?" I asked.

Crashman laughed.

"Imagine a man saying to his wife, 'Another woman is after me——'"

"I see; go on."

"Jane thought for a moment, and then she said: 'If you didn't want to make mischief then, why do you want to make mischief now?'

"Do you get the inwardness of that? The thing runs absolutely logically, yet it turned me into a mischief-maker. Me trying to protect her from a woman not to be trusted, only to be told I was a mischief-maker. But I held myself in.

"'What was the man's name?' asked Jane at last.

"'Sellers,' said I, like a fool.

"'Well, he ought to be ashamed of himself,' said she, 'and I'll certainly tell her.'

"Here was a nice thing, a howling action for slander maybe, and a sure row with Sellers, anyhow.

"'You'll do no such thing,' I said, and then the row began, a first-class conjugal row. It was also the first of any importance between us. We flung bitter things at one another like brick-bats, and it ended up by her breaking down and crying. Horrid!

"I went off down to the bar and had a whisky. I had about six and no dinner. Then I met some steamboat men and went to a cinema, whiskies all the way there and whiskies all the way back. It was a rainy night. It was Southampton after the East, as well as the Mencken woman and Jane and the row, and the thought of Sellers and a slander action, a general all-round breakdown, with more drinks in the smoke-room to follow, seeing I was a guest in the hotel and there was no closing time for me.

"Two waiters got me up to bed, singing. Jane and I had separate rooms, but she came out on the landing to see what the concert party was about—and she'd never seen me tanked before."

Crashman paused to fill and light his pipe, and the music of the band from the port deck came to us, and the thrudding of an electric-light dynamo, mixed with the far-away mumble of the screw.

"Do you know Chillerton Mansions in Kensington?" he went on.

"'*Keep that Mencken woman out of your house, at any cost, if you don't want trouble,' he told me.*"

"That large block of flats?"

"Yes, that's it. A friend had taken us a service flat at the top of it, so we had quarters waiting for us in town, and there I arrived next day with a sick headache and a frozen wife. We had all travelled up from Southampton together, the cat, the Mencken woman, Jane, and myself, all in the same carriage, with luncheon at the same table in the restaurant car, Mrs. M. going back to our carriage every now and then to see that the cat was all right, also making what conversation there was, a family friend and sympathizer, tactful and trying to make things easy, but, of course, not saying a word on the awful subject.

"She came to the flat to see us in, and honestly, despite everything, I was glad to have her, for she saved me talking to Jane about trifles, as I would have had to do if we'd been alone together.

"That night I sort of made it up with Jane, apologized and all that, and the thing blew over, leaving its mark, of course, but not a hint of what was coming.

"I was pretty busy in town and Jane was thrown on her own pretty much, but she was happy enough, for she had shopping to do and friends in London, including Elise. I didn't care; I didn't want any more rows. She could stick to the woman if she wanted to. And things jogged along till one Thursday business turned up that would take me to Birmingham for three days. 'And if that's so,' said Jane, 'I'll go and stay with Cousin Arthur at Staines till Monday. I've promised and promised, and this is a chance. We can shut up the flat whilst we are away—you'll be sure to be back on Monday?'

"'Sure,' said I, and next morning off she went to Staines, and half an hour later off I went with an attaché case for Birmingham.

"We had both clean forgotten the cat, or to tell the flat people to look after it. That confounded cat was to do me in, combined with the Mencken hussy; but I didn't know that as I drove to the Foreign Office, where I had some business to attend to before starting on my journey. Cazalet was the man I saw at the Foreign Office. He had some important papers for me to attend to, and when I said I'd take them with me he put his foot down.

"They had to be attended to right away and I'd have to stay in London in case I was wanted; it was a big rubber complex, and Van Buren, the Dutch syndicate man, was making a bother, and my expert knowledge, straight from the East as I was, might be essential.

"So there I was with nothing to do but wire Birmingham, putting off my appointment, and take myself back to the flat to look over the papers and hold myself on tap, so to speak, if wanted.

"I wasn't in any too good a temper, I assure you, and when I got back to the Mansions and found the cat curled up in an armchair, I wasn't a bit happier at the thought of having to look after it. If I hadn't come back, of course, the flat people would have found it and fed it. I'd have to do that now, and feeding cats is not a hobby of mine, specially Persians.

"Down I sat to my work, and in an hour I had the documents straightened out, and I was putting them in my pocket for the post when I heard a noise; the door opened and in came Mrs. Mencken.

V.

"THE sight of her was enough to send my barometer down with a flop, same as it fell before that last hurricane we had in Java. First Cazalet, then the cat, then the documents, then her on top of it all.

"'Oh, you're in,' said she. 'The lift man said he thought you were both out, so I came up to see. Where is Jane?'

"'Jane's gone to Staines,' said I.

"'And left you?' she said.

"'Well,' I said, 'I'm here—looks as if she had, doesn't it?'

"She sat down in the chair and took the cat in her arms, then she began to talk. At first of ordinary things, then of happiness and unhappiness in life.

"This was the real business. She'd been masking her batteries up to this; she talked, looking at me as if I was a hundred miles away. She said she was going away, working herself up all the time, going away for ever. When I said 'Why?' she threw the cat on the floor, worked her hands, gurgled in her throat, and cried into her handkerchief. I thought I heard the word 'you' half bubble up out of the handkerchief.

"'Now don't be a fool,' I said, absolutely shocked. 'Don't be a fool,' I said, putting my hand on her shoulder, for I half wanted to fling her out of the room.

"Next moment she was up and her arms were round me and she was sobbing on my breast.

"I scraped her off, and holding her by the two shoulders shook her.

"'Don't you know I've a wife?' I cried.

"'A wife,' she bubbled; then, drawing in her breath—and I believe she had actually for the moment forgotten my presence—'A wife—ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!'

"I never heard anything like that hysterical laugh; it was like the soul of a bad woman having *delirium tremens*, and it was all against Jane, poisonous and sneering, and something in my head went snap, and I

saw red, and I caught up my whangee cane, which was on the table, and landed her one lovely wallop over the legs. I did, indeed.

"She screeched, ran to the couch, and put a cushion over her head. Funny, wasn't it? But that's what she did, like an ostrich; and I'd only just thrown my whangee away, because I was afraid of giving her another wallop, when the door opened, and in walked Jane.

"Mrs. Mencken acting hysterics on the couch, me in a blind fury—a pleasant sight for Jane! I saw in a flash that she had come rushing back from Staines, having remembered the cat and thinking me gone to Birmingham. And just that moment in turning I trod on the brute's tail, it gave a yell, and I kicked it under the sofa.

"I didn't kick it hard; just gave it a lift with my toe; it was all a kind of reflex action against circumstance. Then I rushed down the stairs, left the whole caboodle to fight it out among themselves, and found myself in the street without a hat. A taxi was going by. I hailed it, and drove to a hat shop."

"Why didn't you go back and try to explain?"

"Explain what? Why I wasn't in Birmingham? Why Mrs. Mencken was there? Why I'd kicked the cat?—all to a woman in a shocking state of mind? Yes, it's very easy for anyone to say 'Why didn't you explain?' Just exactly what would you have said yourself if you had been in my place?"

"I see. Well, what did you do then?"

"Drove to my brother's, after I had fitted myself with a tile, and got him to go to the Mansions and fetch me some clothes. He was hours away and came back with the clothes and things, and a face as long as a fiddle. Said Jane had gone for good to her cousin's, seemed nervous in my presence, and wanting to get rid of me. Few days after I saw Jane's lawyer—she has money of her own. He didn't seem happy, either. He was tremendously civil but quite definite.

"As far as I could make out the Mencken woman had given no explanation but hysterics, left Jane to think what she liked, and vanished into the blue. As I was saying, you can't get the better of a woman or a cat—a man can't—anyhow.

"Jane did not want a divorce or any scandal like that, but she wouldn't live with me. I went East and now I'm coming back to England again. . . . That's all."

"You said something about my helping you?"

"Oh, that—it just crossed my mind. I want Jane back, and that's the truth. To get her back I'd have to tell her everything, and convince her. That's beyond me. Put the blame on Mrs. M——; no, I'd sooner stick single than start pitching her a yarn on that. But you might be able to help. You see, if the story came to her from a disinterested party, and accidentally, so to speak, it might get home to her; she'd see the story in its proper light."

"You don't mean to suggest my writing to your wife?"

"No; give all the details and publish it in a magazine. Alter the names—that wouldn't matter. She'd recognize the details and come, maybe, to recognize the truth of the business."

"But, my dear man," I cried, "it's easy enough to do that, but it's a million to one against her reading the thing. There are hundreds of magazines——"

"She always reads THE STRAND," said Crashman. "If you can get it in there, she is sure to see it."

SO here it is, Mrs. Crashman, whose real name begins with an L (he asked me to say that to make sure), and, if I cannot vouch for the truth of the story—though I believe it to be true—I can vouch for the fact that Mr. L. is still very sincerely yours.

A New Story of

BULLDOG DRUMMOND

by

"SAPPER"

in Next Month's "Strand"

ULTERIOR MOTIVE

By GILBERT FRANKAU

Illustrated by ANDREW JOHNSON

"BOTH morally and financially," said the lovely Mrs. Ephraim Dadder, "my husband is an obstinate Puritan."

"His financial characteristics," replied Arthur Nodrog, of Nodrog, Nodrog, and Blatherskite, "may be of some assistance to us. The other circumstance—in view of his behaviour towards you—I can only regret."

Whereupon, this being their first interview, solicitor and lady-client considered one another with some care across the document-littered expanse of the big mahogany desk.

"My husband's morals," went on Mrs. Ephraim, her consideration over, "are beside the question. In no circumstances whatever would I consent to divorce him. To begin with, because I love him; to go on with, because I'm an honest woman—and these debts of mine have simply got to be paid."

"Including the dressmakers?"

"Most especially the dressmakers." And Mrs. Ephraim Dadder fell silent, her lovely amber eyes again considering their man.

"He's rather an attractive man," thought Mrs. Dadder. "About the same age as Ephraim. No. He's probably five years older. Say fifty-seven. Pity he hasn't got a moustache. Pity his nails aren't properly manicured. I do like a man with nicely kept hands."

Meanwhile, one of Arthur Nodrog's hands was beating a little tattoo on the desk-top; and he was thinking, "This looks like a pretty good case. I might be able to run the costs up to a couple of thousand. Fifteen hundred, anyway."

Even the "hottest matrimonial lawyer in London," nevertheless—and not for nothing was Arthur Nodrog so known both in and outside legal circles—had not proved quite insensible to his client's charms.

He had noticed those charms when she first entered this stiff room of his—the *svelte* figure, appropriately cloaked in golden mink; the exquisite hands, one bared to receive his formal greeting; the face, not foolishly young, yet with never a sag at the throat nor wrinkle round the eye-sockets; above all, the hair.

Mrs. Ephraim Dadder's hair was ash-blonde. And little though the lady's hat revealed of it, that little sufficed to disturb one's concentration.

"Like to stroke it back from her ears," thought Arthur Nodrog—and pulled such thoughts up with a jerk.

"Most especially the dressmakers," repeated the wife of Ephraim Dadder. "They're nearly all friends, you see. The Princess Blinkiwiski, for instance. You know her, perhaps. She's a perfect darling—though her prices are so awful. And so is Monsieur Payrot—though he's even more expensive. Mr. Nodrog, there's something

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"A woman's first duty," her father remarked, "is to make herself attractive. And can't you find someone better than your father to take you out of an evening?"

—something almost miraculous about a gown designed by Aristide Payrot. This one I've got on is by him; and you can't believe the trouble he took about it. Why, he came over himself, all the way from Paris, just to make certain it was *my* gown."

"Did he really?" said Arthur Nodrog.

"Yes, he really did. And he only charged eighty guineas for it. I told Ephraim so—the very day he deserted me."

"Not deserted," interposed the solicitor.

"But he has deserted me. I thought I made that quite clear. He's been away a whole week. He's living at one of his clubs, the—the Bachelors'. Mr. Nodrog, could anything be more cruel, more damaging to a wife's feelings, than for her husband to take up his abode at the Bachelors'?"

"A most cruel procedure," admitted Arthur Nodrog. "And in certain circumstances it might help us on the question of damages. But I'm afraid you can't sue him for desertion, Mrs. Dadder, until he's been away at least two years."

Whereupon the telephone interrupted them; and after the solicitor had dealt with it, saying, "Oh, quite, Countess. I'm abiding by your instructions; and shall not make the decree absolute until we are guaranteed undisputed custody of your Siamese cat and both the Sealyhams," he went on:—

"But don't let that distress you unduly, Mrs. Dadder. Try to be calm. In a matrimonial crisis such as yours, there is never anything to be gained by not being calm. The law, fortunately, is on your side. We shall bring your husband to book. Most definitely, we shall bring him to book. Every single one of your debts shall be paid. And the allowance he suggests making you—the pitiable sum set out in this letter from his solicitors—this beggarly two thousand a year—shall be doubled, or my name's not Arthur Nodrog."

To which Mr. Nodrog's lady-client, a few appropriate tears glistening at her lovely lashes, replied with a heartfelt "Thank you. I felt, the moment we met, that you would be my friend as well as my lawyer"; and after a little further conversation went off to another important appointment—the Princess Blinkiwiski's dress-show at the Hotel Fantastic in Berkeley Square.

II.

EXCEPT when business took him thither, the senior partner in Nodrog, Nodrog, and Blatherskite did not frequent that aristocratic fragment of London whose centre is Berkeley Square. He resided, well within his ample means, at Claphamberwell—to which salubrious and not too distant suburb he always made his way by the democratic Tube.

Usually, too—being a busy man—he took papers home with him in the Tube; and on the night following his first interview with Mrs. Ephraim Dadder his satchel contained, in addition to other documents, the *précis* of her case, dictated to and very carefully typed by his (male) secretary, and a complete list of her bills.

This last, thinking to interest and amuse her—for she had been rather glum these last days—he showed, after their solid and solitary meal in the big formal dining-room, which, like the rest of the house, had not been refurnished or redecorated since her mother's death, some ten years previously, to his only daughter, and only child, Miriam.

And when Miriam, who was rather a plain young person and bought most of her clothes in Claphamberwell, a locality she adored, expressed indignation at the total figure of Mrs. Dadder's debts, he argued the point with her, saying: "She's a very lovely creature, my dear. And her husband's a very rich man. These things are comparative. Entirely comparative. A woman in Mrs. Dadder's position *must* be well dressed. It's a duty she owes to her husband no less than to herself. And the law—I am thankful to say—recognizes that duty. The husband cannot evade it. He must either make his wife an allowance commensurate with her social obligations—or else he must pay any debts she has reasonably incurred on his behalf. Now these debts, I am going to maintain, were reasonably incurred, on her husband's behalf, by Mrs. Dadder. She contracted them as his agent, with his implied authority."

To which Arthur Nodrog's daughter replied submissively: "Well, of course you know best, father; but it doesn't seem to me quite fair; and if ever I had a husband, however rich he was, I should simply hate myself if I thought I was wasting his money," retiring, after a little further enlightenment, to her virtuous couch.

Left alone, over a final cigar, Arthur Nodrog ruminated a while about his daughter; thinking how fortunate he was, in an age when young women (as his practice proved so frequently) behaved with such freedom, to possess such a treasure of propriety and decorum.

"Otherwise," he ruminated, "I'd never have been able to settle that money on her—though it does save us half our super-tax. Yes, she's a good girl is my Miriam, even

though her looks have prevented her getting married. And after all, what's marriage?"

But from that his thoughts switched back to Mrs. Ephraim Dadder—and presently his cigar ceased to burn.

A glorious creature, Mrs. Ephraim Dadder. How could any man in his sober senses, and the possession of a large fortune, have brought himself to abandon her? "I never would have," decided Arthur Nodrog. "I'd have made her stop spending, though. After all, it's easy enough—if a man only knows the ropes. But these West-end husbands don't seem to know the ropes. They're all of them weak, too. I'll bet Dadder's weak. And I'll bet we beat him."

On which Miriam's father, also, went to his not-quite-so-virtuous couch.

III.

IT was at her third interview with her solicitor, after reading what Arthur Nodrog stigmatized as "a most insulting communication from the other side," that Ephraim Dadder's wife stumbled on the phrase, "ulterior motive." And the more Arthur Nodrog perpended that phrase, the more its legal value appealed to his mind.

"You may be right," he said. "Obviously you must be right, Mrs. Dadder. One has only to look at you to realize that there must be some ulterior motive behind your husband's conduct. After all, he's worth, at the very lowest estimate at which my confidential inquiries place his personal fortune, a quarter of a million. So why—unless there is something far more sinister than you suspect behind all these manœuvres—should he deny himself the pleasure of your society? Merely because you owe a few dressmakers, a few milliners, a few florists, and a few furniture dealers a few paltry thousands? Surely not. Surely such conduct is quite incredible."

"It does seem so, doesn't it?" cooed Cora Dadder, plying a delicately-scented handkerchief. "But then, you know what men are, Mr. Nodrog. And even though Ephraim is such a Puritan, it's always possible," with a sob, "that some other woman——"

"Everything's possible," declared Nodrog then. "And we will most certainly let the other side see, and without delay, that we suspect this possibility. Personally, however, though I agree with you that there must be some ulterior motive, I doubt its being another lady."

"But why, dear Mr. Nodrog?"

"Because, my dear Mrs. Dadder, there are limits even to masculine stupidity."

After which remark, the lady-client ceased to ply her handkerchief; the solicitor rang for his secretary, and began to inform "the other side," "without prejudice," that their client's behaviour to his client, quite apart from its moral aspect, was so legally indefensible that she was rapidly coming to the conclusion that it must be inspired by some ulterior motive, in which case, while at the same time joining issue with their client on all statements of fact, she must reserve to herself the right of taking such action as she might be advised.

Whereto, after a week's delay, the other side replied, also without prejudice, that they had interviewed their client, who had instructed them to join issue with Messrs. Nodrog, Nodrog, and Blatherskite on all statements in their communication of the fifteenth ult.; and that they had further advised him, their client, that, in view of the fact he had already spent "a considerable fortune" on the back of Messrs. Nodrog, Nodrog, and Blatherskite's client, he could not be held responsible for "these disgraceful debts."

To this, his client leaning over his shoulder to make doubly certain that the shorthand notes had been accurately transcribed, Arthur Nodrog retorted that the other side's contention was "childish"; and subsequent correspondence carried on acrimoniously at the moderate fee of six shillings and eightpence plus thirty-three-and-a-third per cent. per letter; subsequent interviews, at any rate on Arthur Nodrog's side, harmoniously at three guineas apiece.

"Do not, however, trouble yourself about the costs, my dear Mrs. Dadder," said Arthur Nodrog. "Our English laws, I am thankful to say, do not leave the grass-widow entirely unprotected in her afflictions. Your husband is liable for my costs. All the same, if you ask my advice, I should try for a divorce."

"The mere thought of divorcing Ephraim, dear Mr. Nodrog," interpolated Cora Dadder, "horrifies me. I am a home-loving woman. And both as my friend and my lawyer, I want you to help me in doing my duty. I have two duties to perform, dear Mr. Nodrog—the first towards mine, or rather Ephraim's creditors, nearly all of whom are Society people; and the second," the lovely lips paused impressively, "towards Society itself."

And when Arthur Nodrog pressed her to explain what she understood to be her duty towards Society, she said, with some emphasis, "The basis of all Society, dear Mr. Nodrog, is the home. And what is home, even though it be, like mine, in Mayfair, without a husband?"

"But must it always be the same husband, Mrs. Dadder?"

To which the lovely grass-widow, glancing about the lovely home where their interview had taken place, answered: "Alas, dear friend, when the husband is as rich as Ephraim, and the house is in his name, and the wife is as penniless as I am, it must."

IV.

ABOUT this time—that is to say, three months after Ephraim Dadder had retired from connubial bliss in Curzon Street—Miriam Nodrog noticed that her father had taken to being manicured. And one morning over breakfast, dutifully reminded that he had forgotten to shave his upper lip, he amazed her by announcing his intention of acquiring a moustache.

Nor was this all. For another week saw him in possession of a new top-hat, several new pairs of trousers, and a particularly up-to-date morning-coat. The Clapham-berwell dinner-hour, moreover, was presently decreed for the modish Mayfair eight-fifteen instead of the plain suburban seven-thirty; and at it Arthur Nodrog frequently treated himself to half a pint of champagne.

He became slightly critical, too, of Miriam's clothes; and commanded her to "smarten herself up."

"A woman's first duty," he remarked on that occasion, "is to make herself attractive. After all, you've got plenty of money. And can't you find someone better than your father to take you out of an evening?"

"And is my little Cora satisfied with her little Arthur?" asked the lawyer, bringing the good news in person.

"I might be able to," admitted Miriam.

Meanwhile Aristide Payrot and the Princess Blinkiwiski (Limited), advised by both Nodrog, Nodrog, and Blatherskite, and the other side, to wit, Hilary, Sinclair, Sinclair, Hilary, Hilary, and Sinclair, that neither side admitted any liability to them, decided to writ both.

The which writs having been duly served, and defences duly entered—and the lovely Mrs. Ephraim Dadder, now Cora to her friend and lawyer, having demonstrated to said lawyer's satisfaction the impossibility of keeping her husband's modest home at 333, Curzon Street, even moderately clean on her beggarly pittance of forty pounds weekly—Mr. Arthur Nodrog, in his new top-hat and morning coat, having duly consulted counsel, in the person of Sir Alimony Absolute, at his chambers in Pumphandle Court, first wrote to Ephraim Dadder, assuring him of his wife's continued devotion to his interests; and this letter receiving only the curtest reply, served him, waiting in person and by appointment at the offices of Hilary, Sinclair, Sinclair, Hilary, Hilary, and Sinclair, with a document demanding that he should return to Number 333, Curzon Street, and the connubial bliss there awaiting him, or risk the full penalty of the law.

"And what is the penalty?" asked Ephraim Dadder, at this juncture, of Thomas Sinclair. "Can she put me in jail?"

"In the present state of our law," Thomas Sinclair assured him, "your wife cannot insist on such an extreme punishment. Though, of course, granted a sufficiency of female Members, Parliament may soon amend the statute so as to remedy this injustice to women. Meanwhile, however, I cannot help feeling, in view of the—er—little disclosure you made to me at the commencement of these proceedings, that we had better consult Sir Nisi Thoro."

Acting on whose silken advice, Messrs. Hilary, Sinclair, Sinclair, Hilary, Hilary, and Sinclair, entered a formal defence to the petition so humbly presented on behalf of Cora Dadder by Messrs. Nodrog, Nodrog, and Blatherskite and promised further particulars within twenty-one days.

At the end of which twenty-one days, however, no particulars forthcoming, Sir Alimony Absolute, appearing in august person, agreed to accept from Sir Nisi Thoro, also appearing in august person, one-fifth of Mr. Ephraim Dadder's income, as honourably declared to the tax-gatherer, *pendente lite*, but not subject to discount or any other deduction for cash.

"And is my little Cora satisfied with her little Arthur?" asked Nodrog, bringing the news of this in person to Curzon Street.

"Yes, dear friend," answered little Arthur's little Cora. "Only—only it's all such a tragedy. I'm too sentimental, I suppose. But I did so hope Ephraim would come back. You see, there's nobody quite like Ephraim. He was never without his cheque-book. Never. And a woman appreciates little things like that. They make home really home. And oh, dear friend, what's to happen if the other cases go against us? I shall never be able to hold up my head again in Society. Never. Even as it is, the Princess won't give me any more credit—and Aristide didn't send me a card for his last show."

Whereupon the lovely Mrs. Ephraim Dadder burst into the loveliest tears, sobbing, "How can he treat me like this? Oh, how can Ephraim treat me like this? What's at the back of it all? There must be some woman, or some girl, at the back of it all. Couldn't you find out, dear friend?"

"And supposing I do find out?" asked Nodrog. "Will it make any difference?"

"It—it might," admitted Cora Dadder. "Because if we did find out that there was a girl, and that Ephraim wanted to marry her, he'd be kinder, he'd be more liberal, he'd settle my debts, he might even settle this house and some capital on me."

"And if he would settle this house and some capital on you?"

"Ah—that would indeed make a difference, dear friend, wouldn't it?"

But although Ephraim Dadder's movements were subjected, and for several more weeks, to the closest scrutiny, that scrutiny revealed nothing—beyond a bi-weekly afternoon at the talking-pictures, and certain evenings at the theatre in company of "a young female we are unable to identify, but whom he always treats with the greatest respect."

"And we can't go on paying out thirty-five pounds a week to know he's treating any female, young or old, with respect," pronounced Arthur Nodrog.

SO the scrutiny ceased; and with the day set down for trial of the action, "*In re* Princess Blinkiwiski and Aristide Payrot *v.* Ephraim and Cora Dadder," drawing daily closer, "our Mr. Arthur Nodrog" felt it his duty to send a letter to "your Mr. Thomas Sinclair," asking permission to call on "your Mr. Thomas Sinclair, without prejudice," on the following afternoon.

Which permission having been granted, Mr. Arthur Nodrog took it upon himself to declare that "between men of the world it was always better that the cards should be on the table," and Mr. Thomas Sinclair, rather more direct in his methods, to remark that if Mr. Nodrog had any proposition to put before him, he'd better fire away.

And after Arthur Nodrog had fired away thus: "Well, there's always an ulterior motive in this sort of case, isn't there? And between you and me and the gatepost, I don't mind admitting that if we could get these debts of ours settled and the house and furniture, and some—er—other security for our future; said security not to be forfeit in the event of our re-marriage, we might be persuaded to amend our petition," Thomas Sinclair said, "What about our settling the debts; the house and furniture; and forty thousand, in trust during your client's lifetime?"

Whereto Arthur Nodrog retorted, "It'd have to be an outright payment with no conditions attaching. And anyway, forty thousand wouldn't be enough."

"How much would be enough?" asked Sinclair then; and after Nodrog had replied, "Well—that's rather difficult. You see—after all, it *is* best, in matters of this kind, to lay all one's cards on the table—we are not entirely unprovided with evidence of a certain nature," the other went on. "But I'm sure you'd be the last person in the world to consider making use of that evidence—even if it were proof of anything beyond platonic association."

Thus bringing the matter to a considerable impasse.

And the more Arthur Nodrog, taxiing back to his own offices, considered that impasse, the less it arrided him. Since, obviously, Thomas Sinclair knew as well as he did that "the young female" whom his detectives had failed to identify could not possibly be cited as co-respondent if the lovely Cora decided to amend her petition and sue for a divorce.

"Nothing doing in that direction," confided a baffled Nodrog to a distressed

Blatherskite. "I believe the wretched fellow really is a Puritan." And when Blatherskite, who had also noticed the new clothes, and the moustache, and the manicuring, to say nothing of those frequent tea-time visits to Curzon Street, asked with distinct meaning, "Why are you so keen on getting her a divorce? Why don't we just try for a judicial separation?" the senior partner in Nodrog, Nodrog, and Blatherskite banged his fist on the desk-top, shouting, "The basis of Society, Blatherskite, is the home. And what is home, even for such a lovely creature as our client in these proceedings, without a husband?"

NOR did Arthur Nodrog's composure return until three days later, when, called to his telephone, he heard Thomas Sinclair say, "Look here—this Dadder case—I've just been having a talk with Mr. Dadder. And I think we can settle things. When can I come and see you about 'em?"

"You can come right away," said Nodrog.

But what transpired at that interview was so private and so confidential that it can no more be revealed in this veracious chronicle than it is revealed in any correspondence exchanged between the parties.

Suffices that, when the time came for

He showed his lovely client the cheque with one hand while he stroked her ash-blonde hair with the other.

Lord Justice O'Turk and a special jury to hear "*In re* Princess Blinkiwiski and Aristide Payrot, consolidated actions, *v.* Ephraim and Cora Dadder," both leaders, their briefs marked at a mere hundred guineas apiece, were happy to inform his lordship and the jury that a settlement had been arrived at between the parties—and that on a subsequent occasion Sir Alimony Absolute, for another hundred guineas, informed another Court, "M'lud, I appear for Mrs. Dadder. As your lordship will observe, this was originally a suit for restitution of conjugal rights. Since the filing of that suit, however, certain facts have been brought to Mrs. Dadder's knowledge, as a result of which she has been forced, although with the profoundest reluctance, to amend her petition."

And after Sir Nisi Thoro, for a further hundred guineas, had announced, "M'lud, I am happily in a position to inform you that the respondent has made ample provision for the petitioner's future," matters took their usual course until a certain gorgeous June morning when there appeared before Arthur Nodrog, dreaming of bliss in his private office, a pert young woman, yclept Miss Macgillicuddy, who said, "This 'ere Mr. Dadder's reputation may be nothing to 'im. But mine's something to me. Never even give me a kiss, 'e didn't. Though I did spend a night art with 'im, as I told my young man when I wrote and told 'ow I'd got the money to pay me passage art to him in South Africa. But my young man 'e won't believe it and 'e won't 'ave me art—not since another young woman—and a nice piece of goods she is, I don't mind tellin' yer—'as sent him that newspaper cuttin' about me. So I'm goin' to 'ave the law on this 'ere Mr. Dadder, I am. And since you've been arter 'im once, 'ere's a ten poun' note, one of the very ones 'e gave me for pretendin' I was 'is sweetheart, for you to get arter 'im again with."

Which seemed to Arthur Nodrog, by now in that month of roseate pre-connubial excitement when all things are possible to a man of tact and resolution, such an important piece of information that he instantly ordered his managing clerk to take a proof of the pert young woman's evidence; and while this was in progress, summoned Blatherskite, who at once agreed:—

"Indubitably, Arthur. Miss Macgillicuddy has been the victim of a grave injustice. Either her honour must be vindicated, in which case the King's Proctor will intervene and Mrs. Dadder's decree will not be made absolute, or else she must be compensated for her loss of honour. In which case, don't you think that Mrs. Dadder, too, should—er—receive an even ampler provision for her future?"

"That," replied Arthur Nodrog, "seems to me so obvious that I feel it my duty to get Thomas Sinclair round here without delay."

And so distressed was Thomas Sinclair when he heard of the grave injustice suffered by Miss Macgillicuddy that, a day later, he was willing to present her with a thousand pounds, on condition she at once sailed to join her beloved, or anybody else's beloved, in South Africa.

And so much greater was Mr. Thomas Sinclair's distress when Mr. Arthur Nodrog, always eager to defend the poor and the oppressed, drew himself up to his full height, saying, "Not much. I want two thousand for her, and another twenty thousand for Mrs. D. Because the evidence you provided us with was a tissue of lies from beginning to end, and Nodrog, Nodrog, and Blatherskite aren't going to lend themselves to perpetrating this kind of fraud on British justice," that Mr. Thomas Sinclair actually called Mr. Arthur Nodrog a blackmailer, a thief, a dirty scoundrel, and various other names seldom used in interviews between solicitors, ending:—

"You think yourself a jolly astute chap, Nodrog. You think we don't know about *your* ulterior motive. You think just because we've paid up all the lady's debts and given her the house and furniture, and agreed to give her fifty thousand the day the decree's made absolute, that we're so keen on this divorce going through that we'll pay another twenty-two thousand rather than risk the King's Proctor intervening. That's what you think, isn't it? And I'm not saying you're wrong. I'm not saying for a moment we sha'n't pay this twenty-two thousand. The chances are we shall. Even though it is blackmail. But believe me, you'll be sorry for this one day, Nodrog. Yes, by jingo, you'll be sorry for this before you're very much older."

V.

ARTHUR NODROG, however, who had been called such names before, remained calm—as it behoves both men and women to remain calm in all matrimonial crises. Neither did he flinch from his legal duty. And at three o'clock on the very day Dadder *v.* Dadder, decree nisi, was made absolute, Messrs. Nodrog, Nodrog, and Blatherskite, having duly encashed one cheque, totalling seventy-two thousand pounds, drawn in their favour by Messrs. Hilary, Sinclair, Sinclair, Hilary, Hilary, and Sinclair, drew two other cheques, totalling somewhat less owing to the deduction of costs, the first and smaller

one in favour of Amelia Macgillicuddy, and the second, for the bulk of the amount, in favour of Cora Dadder.

This latter cheque Arthur Nodrog himself showed to his lovely client with one hand, while he at last stroked her ash-blonde hair with the other, saying as he did so, "Arthur's little Cora is a rich woman now. So when she marries him Arthur's little Cora mustn't run into debt—or her creditors will take her money and not little Arthur's."

AND after Arthur's little Cora had promised, "Darling, now I know how difficult it is to get anybody else's money, I promise you I'll never be extravagant with my own," nothing remained except to inform Miriam of the pleasant fact that she would soon be accompanying her father from Claphamberwell to Mayfair.

"Because, you see," said little Arthur to his little Cora, "quite apart from her being such a splendid housekeeper, I've settled most of my capital on Miriam to save supertax. So, even though she is so plain, I shouldn't like her to be too far out of my sight, not with all these gigolos and fortune-hunters about."

The which idea so appealed to Miriam's prospective stepmother that she flung herself into her prospective husband's arms, exclaiming, "Sweetheart, how clever you are. And how good. Of course she shall come and live with us. And I'll take care of her as though she were my very own daughter."

. . . A plan, it may be remarked *en passant*, that the once lovely Mrs. Dadder, and now even lovelier Mrs. Nodrog, was only prevented from carrying out by Miriam herself, the first of whose letters, received by the happy couple on their honeymoon, read thus :—

"Dearest Father,—It didn't seem fair to worry you with my little affairs while you were so busy getting married. But I feel I must write and tell you that I'm getting married, too. Our wedding's to-morrow. Darling Ephraim's so pleased and excited. I met him quite by accident some time before he left his wife. And we've been in love with each other ever since then. Though, of course, I couldn't tell you *about it. Ephraim's been such an angel to me. Always. Even when that dreadful Macgillicuddy girl tried to blackmail him, he never grumbled at the extra money. He just paid up, for my sake. Wasn't it too marvellous of him? That's why I'm so glad I sha'n't be quite penniless, like his first wife. You've an angel, too, father, for settling all that money on me. Seventy-five thousand pounds! Father dear, you must have worked so hard to make seventy-five thousand pounds. And I hardly like to take it all. So I've asked Mr. Sinclair to send you back three. He, Mr. Sinclair, says you must have drawn up the deed of settlement yourself. Because it's so cleverly done—and you couldn't get the other seventy-two thousand back even if you wanted to. But of course you wouldn't want to, would you, father dear? You're too fond of your little Miriam. And you'll be fond of Ephraim, too, when you really know him. He's such a good man. He's never done anything dishonourable in his life—except that once when he pretended Miss Macgillicuddy was his sweetheart. And he only did that for my sake—and yours, father. He asks me to say that it really was for your sake just as much as for mine. And that you mustn't feel under any obligation to him about the house or the furniture, to which you're very welcome, as he always hated living in Curzon Street. And that he doesn't bear you any grudge for just doing your duty by his Cora and Miss Macgillicuddy."*

In view of which tender and dutiful letter it seems very strange that Arthur Nodrog of Mayfair—whose wife, one is glad to record, has learned her financial lesson so well that she never lets even him touch a halfpenny of her money—and his son-in-law, Ephraim Dadder—now one of the most respected residents in Claphamberwell—should still be on such distant terms.

MY LIFE

Miss Lillah McCarthy as Canada in a scene photographed in Buckingham Palace last year for the film "One Family," in which the various nations of the Empire were represented by many beautiful women.

ON THE STAGE

By LILLAH McCARTHY

Edited by Lady Vaughan

AS I look back through the mists of memory, my childhood's days seem very happy ones to me.

I was born in Cheltenham, one of a large family of boys and girls—nine in all. I was the seventh child, the youngest of the three girls. I was my father's great pet and companion, even from my earliest days to the day he died—a day of grief, indeed, to me. He was a remarkable man, my father; of South-Irish family, the MacCarthy More. His father had settled in Cheltenham, and my young memories are full of the long walks my father and I used to take on the Cotswold Hills, my small steps trying to keep pace with his long strides; while, with his splendid head of blue-black hair tossing in the breeze, he would declaim long passages from Shakespeare, Milton, and the Bible. I think it was that which instilled in me my love for poetry, also the habit of learning my parts by saying them out loud. To this day I can learn a poem or a part better in the open air, shouting it aloud to the heavens, than by any other method.

We moved to London when I was about fifteen years old. How I missed my Cheltenham hills; though I found London very entrancing, as I then began to study seriously for the stage. Looking back, it seems to me I always wanted to be an actress. My father and I being the companions we were, I told him so. Instead of laughing at me, he took me quite seriously and said: "Then you must be trained for it." So a busy life began.

There was little money to spare in the household of the size of ours, augmented as it often was by relatives, so I was given a few pounds in order to go to Hermann Vezin's School of Acting; Hermann Vezin taught elocution, Emil Behnke voice production, D'Auban dancing and stage deportment, while the great M. Bertrand was our fencing master. I adored every minute of it. Hard work—but that has never worried me. I worked like a Trojan. Hermann Vezin's method was very interesting. He laid great stress on the importance of distinct articulation. My first lessons consisted in articulating the letters of the alphabet until I pronounced them to his satisfaction. We had to visit the British Museum and study the Elgin Marbles and other Greek sculpture in order to get poise. I was never called by my name at the studio; they named me Gruach, after Lady Macbeth—for that was her name; during my time with Hermann Vezin, the students called me nothing else. Curiously enough, it is the only occasion in my life when I had a pet name, or was called anything else but "Lillah."

My first appearance there was greeted with shouts of merriment. Every time the students looked at me they rocked with laughter and couldn't stop. This made me rather indignant. Afterwards they told me why. They said I looked so comical with my very short skirts above my knees, my mop of thick black curls, and my air of "a brooding tragedy queen."

My one ambition was to play Lady Macbeth, and I was continually bothering

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Mr. Vezin as to when I was to rehearse the part. "You have got to learn your work first," he said. "You want to run before you can walk." I also joined an Amateur Dramatic Society. We were very ambitious, as we did several plays of Shakespeare.

When William Poel produced Swinburne's "Locrine," he asked me to create the part of Gwendolen (which, by the way, is the longest woman's part ever written). During rehearsals I went with Mr. Poel to The Pines, Putney Hill, the house where Swinburne resided with his friend, Watts-Dunton.

One of her earliest rôles—Miss Lillah McCarthy as Ophelia, in 1900.

It was a smug, mid-Victorian residence, not at all the place I associated with a great poet. Mr. Poel warned me that I must not be frightened when I met Swinburne, who was of a highly excitable and nervous disposition. The poet received us with great charm of manner. The first thing he said to me was, "You can't do this part. You are too young." The vibrating tones of his voice seemed like a choric chant as he read his own lines to me, but I must confess I could not understand what he said. Then he gave me a most difficult passage to read, and whilst I was doing so he said, "That's right; you have a fine vibrating voice, compelling in its heroic quality."

As many people know, Sarah Siddons is buried in Paddington Green. In those days there was only a flat stone slab to mark the great tragedienne's burying-place. The Town Clerk of Paddington started a fund to get money to erect a statue instead. It was decided to give a performance of "Macbeth" at St. George's Hall, Langham Place, now no longer in existence, but in those days a popular place for giving amateur performances. As I was tall and dark, I was asked to play Lady Macbeth. I *was* pleased, for I always longed to play the part—it seemed the height of my ambition. George Bernard Shaw attended as dramatic critic for *The Saturday Review*. In his notice of the performance, he gave me a great dressing-down. Everything I did was wrong. I walked wrong. I spoke wrong. I moved wrong. But he tempered the wind to the shorn lamb by adding that I was evidently born to act and had great natural ability; he advised me to go to the country and learn my job for ten years.

Shaw's notice caused several theatrical managers to be interested in me; among others who came to see me act Olivia in William Poel's production of "Twelfth Night" was Mr. Ben Greet. I acted Olivia in a blonde wig, and very becoming it was. After the performance, Mr. Greet came to see me and offered me the position of leading lady in the company he was just sending on tour. Dorothea Baird (Mrs. H. B. Irving) had been going to play for him, but he had released her to go to His Majesty's to play "Trilby" for Tree. I said that if he would also engage my brother Dan, who was playing in "Twelfth Night," I would accept. He agreed, and told us to come to his office next day to sign the contract.

Lillah McCarthy at the age of twelve.

When he saw me the following day with my black hair down my back—in my mother's opinion I was still too young to put it up—and my short, schoolgirl frock, he got a great surprise.

We were to begin our tour in three weeks. Think of the excitement! Sixteen years old and a leading lady! Our repertory consisted of seven plays—" Romeo and Juliet," " Hamlet," " Othello," " Masks and Faces," " Much Ado About Nothing," " The Two Roses " and " The School for Scandal." I played Juliet, Ophelia, Desdemona, Peg Woffington, Lady Teazle, Beatrice, and one of the girls in " The Two Roses." My first professional appearance was in Guernsey in " The Two Roses," when H. B. Irving played his father's part. He also played Romeo to my Juliet. At the first performance, at the point when Romeo walks on and sees Juliet for the first time and takes her hand, H. B. said to me, " What the devil do I say ? " I cooed the lines to him :—

" If I profane with my unworthiest hand
This holy shrine . . ."

My salary was two pounds ten shillings a week as leading lady, and the work was very hard. We rehearsed from ten to three; we then went home and had our dinner. I went for a walk every day from four to six. To the theatre again, and a cup of tea while I dressed and made-up for the performance, which began at seven-thirty—a different play every night. When the performance was over, we rehearsed on the stage the songs, the minuet, the gavotte, and other stately dances for our next day's performance to the music of the orchestra; for we could not have the use of the stage at any other time. Then home to our lodgings, supper, and " so to bed "; a long day, but we were all young, enthusiastic, very keen on our work.

It was splendid training for a young actress. The Elizabethan spirit of Shakespeare is so much more real and genuine than the namby-pamby Victorian prunes and prisms. For instance, I always played Ophelia as I saw her—a girl of her time and surroundings. I see her a full-blooded type, a Court lady, daughter of one of the highest dignitaries, brought up in a very venal, depraved, and luxurious Court, where morals were ignored and only pleasure reigned. The only real thing in her life of artificialities was her love for Hamlet. It was the realization of her own worthlessness compared with this one pure spirit, as well as the knowledge of the treachery and chicanery with which he was surrounded—sending him to England in order to get him out of the way—that unbalanced her mind. In my opinion it is ridiculous to act a girl brought up in such Court surroundings as a bread-and-butter miss with no experience of life.

THE spirit of Shakespeare's creation is lost unless you take into consideration the times he lived in and the Court life of that period. This is one of the reasons why acting Shakespeare is such good training for a young actor or actress. His times were so spacious—his atmosphere takes on the virility and splendour of the great days of great Elizabeth. In " Romeo and Juliet " we see Juliet, a young, gay girl of fourteen, light-hearted, full of fun and joy, with no experience of life. She feels only the poetry of love and passion. She marries Romeo. Then her saucy gaiety changes swiftly to fear. Those fine lines :—

" O God ! I have an ill-divining soul !
Methinks I see thee, now thou art below,
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb,"

give us the changing note of Juliet's character. From that moment she is devoured by fear, dominated by fear, driven by fear from one terror to another, until finally she rushes to the Friar's cell to implore him to save her from this worse than death

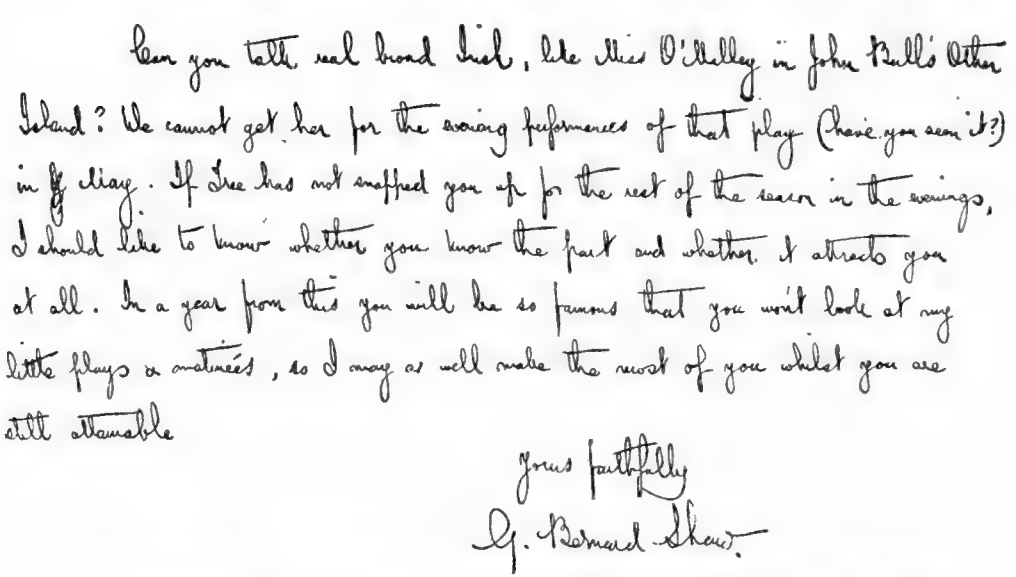
which is threatening her—this marriage to Paris whilst Romeo is alive. Unless one realizes this instant change of Juliet on her wedding night, the character loses its significance. From that moment the whole pace of the play changes. As storm devours a summer sky, the sunny idyll becomes a brooding tragedy haunted by Fear.

The company toured all over England, Scotland, and Ireland. My brother Dan and I used to take long walks whenever we were not rehearsing or acting, visiting every place of interest. I thus got to know the English country well. We were all keen as mustard on our work. Ben Greet was a hard taskmaster. He would never allow any slacking; he insisted we should always give our best. He did not stint his praise when we did well, but always encouraged us to do better. Laurence and H. B. Irving and many others who became well-known actors and actresses afterwards were members of the company.

It was while I was touring with Ben Greet that Wilson Barrett, then at the zenith of his fame and popularity, sent Golding Bright to Edinburgh to see me act in "Romeo and Juliet." He was casting the American company for his play, "The Sign of the Cross," then running at the Lyric Theatre to colossal business—indeed, the play proved a world-record breaker. He selected me to play Berenice in London, and afterwards I was to play Mercia, the leading part, in America.

I played Berenice at the Lyric, but I was not a success, though everyone said I looked very handsome. I wore very beautiful robes and jewels in the part and got quite good notices, but I know I was not good; and the part—that of a haughty, cruel, unprincipled Roman patrician lady under the Cæsars—never appealed to me. I could not get into the skin of it. All my life I cannot do a part justice unless it appeals to my imagination. Now in Mercia, the Christian slave, I was good, and was a really remarkable success wherever I played her. We went to America in 1896. We toured all the principal cities of the Eastern States of America. "The Sign of the Cross" appealed to the American public and we played to big houses.

AFTER Wilson Barrett's death in 1904, I was at a loose end. I felt his loss very much; I had been with him for eight years, the last few as his leading lady. Though I knew I must work, I did not want to do anything but get away from everyone, to find myself, me, Lillah McCarthy, my own self. To get away from all my people, my friends, and be alone. I wanted to empty my mind of all I had previously thought, to be re-born. I put a change of clothes into a knapsack, my toilet requisites and my three books—Shakespeare, Blake, and the Bible—and dressed myself, in simple woollen clothes, a navy blue serge. I had twenty pounds which I had saved. I changed this into sovereigns and started out. I took a cab to Paddington, and a ticket to Exeter. I got into the train,


Can you talk real broad Irish, like Miss O'Malley in John Bull's Other Island? We cannot get her for the evening performances of that play (have you seen it?) in Fleet Street. If she has not snaffled you up for the rest of the season in the evenings, I should like to know whether you know the part and whether it attracts you at all. In a year from this you will be so famous that you won't look at my little plays or matinées, so I may as well make the most of you whilst you are still attainable

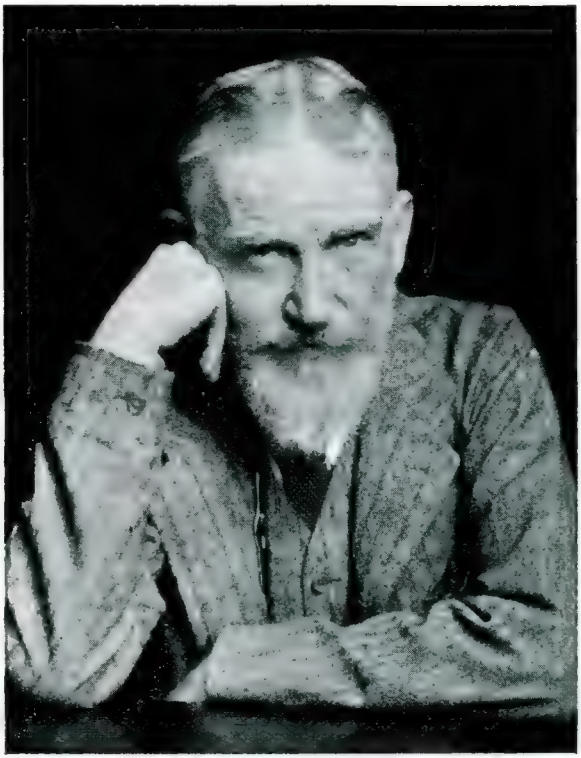
Yours faithfully
G. Bernard Shaw.

A facsimile of part of a letter to Miss McCarthy from George Bernard Shaw. As a result of this letter Miss McCarthy took up the part of Nora.

but forgot to get out at Exeter. I was asleep, I think, and when I awoke I found myself at Launceston. I had not the faintest idea where Launceston was. However, I found an inn, took a room for the night, and by seven in the morning I was on the high road, swinging away towards Tintagel. I had bread and cheese and apples in my little bag, and all the world before me.

For two glorious weeks I sped through the lovely county of Cornwall, sometimes dipping to the coast, slipping naked into the sea, stuffing my few garments into my bag, and wearing my long coat only, so that I could feel the wind blowing on me as I ran. Before reaching a village I slipped on my garments again, found a cottage or an inn where I put up for the night, and slept deeply, deliciously, dreamlessly, until another day of freedom dawned.

My holiday was over. I returned to London refreshed in mind, body, and spirit—reborn, and began to look for work.



George Bernard Shaw, many of whose letters written to Miss McCarthy when she was creating the rôles of some of his famous heroines are given in these reminiscences.

I HAD seen in the newspapers that Bernard Shaw's play, "Man and Superman," was about to be produced at the Court Theatre, Sloane Square. Mr. Shaw had advised me to learn my business, and to come to him in ten years' time. I had followed his advice. I had worked incessantly during that time learning my job, and had acted many parts all over the world. The ten years was up. I remembered; but would he? I wrote and reminded him of what he had said, and soon had the first of many proofs that Shaw never forgets a friend and never goes back on his word. I got a letter asking me to come and see him at his house, 10, Adelphi Terrace, where he then lived. I do not believe he remembered me at first until I said, "I am Lillah McCarthy. I have been learning my business for the last ten years."

"Here is Ann Whitefield," he answered.

A few days later I got the following letter from him:—

"1st March, 1905.

"DEAR MISS MCCARTHY,

"I want to ask you two questions 'without prejudice':—

"1. If the Stage Society were to ask you to play for them on Sunday evening, the 9th April, and on the afternoon of the 10th and 11th—in an exceedingly difficult and possibly shockingly unpopular leading part, by which you would gain nothing but three guineas to pay for your cabs, and enough trouble and worry to take quite fifty guineas' work and energy and temper out of you, would you say 'Yes' or 'No'?

"2. Did you ever read a play by me called 'Man and Superman,' and, if so, can you imagine any woman playing the part of Ann Whitefield?

"If not, I will send you a copy.

"Yours faithfully,

"G. BERNARD SHAW."

Shaw's forceful personality and genius had made a great impression on me. I wanted very much to be associated with his work; I wrote to him that I had not read the play, but would like to do so. He sent it with a characteristic note:—

"4th March, 1905.

"I will not send you a whole 'Superman' yet. The entire play would last about seven and a half hours.

"What do you think of the enclosed cut version? Does Ann appeal to you at all?

"Yours faithfully,
"G. BERNARD SHAW."

Ann *did* appeal to me. I wanted to act her, I felt I must do so. I agreed to appear for the Stage Society on April 9th. Then began a series of tiresome postponements. G. B. S. was not then the popular author he is to-day. Managers were chary of putting on his plays, could see no money in them. Here are three letters I received from him about the production:—

"A hitch, as usual! I am afraid I cannot get you a good Tanner for the 9th April. Henry Ainley, whom I had secured for you, has had to take an engagement to play Cassio (! ! !) on the 8th April. I am afraid I shall have to postpone until late in May, for we had better not spoil the cast for the sake of playing before Easter instead of in the climax of the season. I hope the dresses will not be out of fashion by then.

"Can you play late in May; for I must have you at all hazards.

"Yours faithfully,
"G. BERNARD SHAW."

18th March, 1905.

"The Stage Society will postpone the 'Superman' to the 28th May (or perhaps the 21st), if this will suit you.

"There are three reasons for regarding the postponement as a blessing in disguise. (1) We shall perform at the climax of the season. (2) We shall get a much better cast as regards the three most important men. (3) I hope to be able to induce the Vedrenne-Barker management at the Court to take up the play and give at least nine *matinées* of it; so that we shall all get a better return for our labour than the Stage Society could give us.

"If by any chance the thing were a great success—and Heaven only knows what may happen with an incalculable person like you in an incalculable part—it would not drop after nine *matinées*.

"Let me know whether May will suit you.

"Yours faithfully,
"G. BERNARD SHAW."

25th March, 1905.

"Mr. J. E. Vedrenne, of the Court Theatre, wants to see you about the proposed nine *matinées* of 'Man and Superman.' Will you call on him or make an appointment? He seems a little shy of approaching you without some encouragement. Be as lenient with him financially as you can; for the Court is a very small theatre, and the profits of nine *matinées* still smaller; so do not make him pay what Frohman would pay you, or the poor man will be ruined. He is utterly terrified by the constellation I am imposing on him for the play.

"Can you talk real broad Irish, like Miss O'Malley in 'John Bull's Other Island'? We cannot get her for the evening performance of that play (have you seen it?) in May. If Tree has not snapped you up for the rest of the season in the evenings, I should like to know whether you know the part and whether it attracts you at all. In a year from this you will be so famous that you won't look at my little plays and *matinées;* so I may as well make the most of you whilst you are still attainable.

"Yours faithfully,
"G. BERNARD SHAW."

I HAD been busy studying Ann all these days. She was a designing minx who knew what she wanted and determined to get it. I composed her of three women I knew, one a sly cat, another a gay, amusing, and charming creature, the third myself. I lived in Knightsbridge at the time, and used to walk round and round the Serpentine every day, saying my part out loud; people looked at me in a queer way—no doubt they thought "the poor girl is mad"!

While I was waiting for "Man and Superman" to be produced, as I could not live on air, I accepted an offer from Beerbohm Tree to play at His Majesty's Theatre.

Owing to the many postponements of "Man and Superman," the Court Theatre decided to revive "John Bull's Other Island." I was playing at His Majesty's, studying Ann and rehearsing Nora—we rehearsed every morning in a room at the top of the theatre until the few final rehearsals, when we were allowed to use the stage. There were six evening performances and six *matinées* every week at the Court. As Nora, G. B. S. made me wear a simple little cotton frock. It was made by a little dressmaker of delaine, at a few pence a yard, but even that was not plain enough for him, and did not please him when he saw it. He said it looked too fashionable, and made me wear it back to front; all the gathers had been at the back, and this gave me a funny bunched-up appearance. Nora, he said, was not to be the fascinating colleen usually presented on the stage, but a real type. He insisted that I should scrag my hair back and make up a dirty white colour. Irish girls, Shaw said, of Nora's class are badly fed; their complexions suffer from the

constant diet of strong tea and bread and butter which is their staple food!

Shaw, of course, produced all his own plays. He knew exactly what he wanted, how everything should be said and done—he stuck to it until he got his own way. During a rehearsal of "John Bull," Louis Calvert, who was playing the part of the sentimental Englishman, Broadbent, said to me, "Isn't G. B. S. a marvellous producer? It is so easy to work for him, he knows exactly what he wants; and, more than that, he can tell you exactly how to get the effects he desires." Shaw used to write us long letters, very detailed, telling us his conception of the people we were to play. Though very outspoken in his criticisms—he spared no one with that caustic pen and tongue of his—yet his patience was infinite, and he would go over and over a point until he got it as he wished.

I did very well as Nora. Louis Calvert said to me one day during a performance: "Do you know you have the power to be a great tragic actress?" During rehearsals of "Man and Superman," in fact, only a couple of days before the Stage Society production, my brother Dan, who was in the theatre, suggested I should play Ann in a clear, compelling tone. I took his advice, with the result that the high, clear tones I used gave me the right comedy touch.

"Man and Superman" was put on at the Court Theatre for a series of *matinées* on May 23rd, 1905. It received a regular ovation from the Press. Ann Whitefield was the first part I created at the Court, as in Nora I followed Miss Ellen O'Malley. The fashions of the time were rather amusing. We wore very long dresses, very full at the feet and tight at the waist, large picture hats perched on our hair, which was very elaborately dressed. I had to provide my own dresses for Ann out of my salary of twelve pounds ten shillings a week, which was all I was paid when I began work at the Court, and with it I had to achieve the "pomegranate splendour" (the twelve pounds ten shillings look) Mr. Shaw desired. He must have considered I was dressed adequately, as he vouchsafed no criticism of my clothes. I began to know what fame is like; letters poured in on me from numberless people I had never even heard of. I was interviewed. I was photographed. I was bombarded with invitations and pestered to appear at charity performances.

I married in April, 1906. G. B. S. wrote me this letter, so characteristically Shavian that I feel I must insert it:—

"30th May, 1906.

"I seriously think the Court Theatre must be transferred to a tent on Putney Heath. The returns for the week just to hand are disgraceful: only £67 17s. 5½d.

As Mercia, the Christian Slave, in Wilson Barrett's famous play, "The Sign of the Cross."

per performance. In short, 'Brassbound' has been a failure; 'You Never Can Tell' has been a failure; the sole successes have been the two plays you appeared in; and now you have gone and shattered the dream by getting married. I ask you, how is the thing to go on?

"I haven't even seen 'Prunella'; and now it's over.

"I have so much to say that I despair of getting it on paper before you come back; so it must wait until then. Thank you for the note on Cleopatra.

"I am in such a hopeless mess with masses of unsettled affairs and undone work that I have grown reckless and rascally. *Après moi le déluge!*

"Rodin writes that the bust is a success—that people divine my character from it and call me 'a young Moses'!!! Justice at last—from a Frenchman, of course.

'Yours ever,
"G. B. S."

I had been in Paris a few weeks before, when Shaw was sitting to Rodin for his bust. I went out nearly every day with the Shaws to Rodin's studio just outside Paris, a huge room in the midst of a delightful garden. When I first saw the bust I did not like it a bit: he had made of G. B. S. a pleasant, ordinary type. I began to tell Rodin about Shaw and his wonderful plays; Rodin got very interested. Then at luncheon G. B. S. got into his stride and talked as only he can talk. Rodin watched him like a lynx, and with a few deft touches he altered the pleasant mask to the great masterpiece it is to-day, one of the finest specimens of Rodin's genius. Rodin would never let us see more than one or two of his works at a time. He would unveil one piece of sculpture and leave us to admire it, while he went on with his work.

I played Gloria Clandon in "You Never Can Tell"—not a very amusing or interesting part. As everyone knows, the interest of the play centres round William the Waiter; most of the time Gloria has to be on the stage, absolutely still, doing nothing. Mrs. Patrick Campbell came to see the play, and afterwards to my dressing-room to have a chat. "How can you do it?" she said. "*I* do not know how to stand still doing nothing; it would drive me mad. Never could I act for this management." Yet within the year she acted Hedda Gabler at the Court.

Bernard Shaw, who was spending a holiday in Cornwall, had written saying he was writing a play for me. Three weeks afterwards he wrote: "The doctors are so amusing that Jennifer and Dubedat have to take a back seat." While waiting for "Jennifer," as he intended to call the play, I accepted an engagement with Mr. Arthur Bourchier to play in W. J. Locke's "The Morals of Marcus" at the Garrick Theatre. It was "W. J.'s" first play and his first experience of things theatrical. He was great fun, so naïve, just like a child, everything thrilled and interested him. He was a very charming, delightful, lovable creature, one of the nicest men I have ever met—and so appreciative of one's work. Alexandra Carlisle played the girl, Carlotta, and I had to enact the part of a seductive society vamp. I wore the most beautiful dresses from Worth, of Paris, and the play proved a great success and had a long run.

IN September, I got this letter from G. B. S.:—

"1st September, 1906.

"I have instructed Archer to announce that you will play the heroine in 'The Doctor's Dilemma.' It will be a lucky play, as this morning, coming up from the beach, by a special act of Providence (to retrieve a book Charlotte had lost) I found in my path a most beautiful snake, two feet long, with an exquisite little head about the size of the tip of your little finger, and a perfect design in lozenges on its back. It stayed nearly two minutes (the first ten seconds of which were spent in hissing at me) and then went away, sometimes tumbling down a precipice two feet high into a heap of rings, sometimes gliding through the grass. It finally vanished into a bramble: but we parted the best of friends; and I am now convinced that 'The Doctor's Dilemma' will be a complete success for you, for the Court, and for the universe.

"After all, the snake had not much of a part; but its figure produced an extraordinarily poetic effect.

"However, the setting was good. It was a very fine day and the sun was blazing on the creature's lozenges. It would not have produced any effect at all in the Brighton Aquarium. The moral is, that a salary is not everything. Although, in view of the recent returns at the Court, I think you may want all you can get to save having to go on tour at thirty shillings a week, yet there is no golden rule as to taking big salaries and doing anything you are paid for; for it is no use making yourself dear in order to make yourself cheap. Whenever they make you an offer, say, 'Show me the play.' Miss Evelyn Millard did that years ago when they offered her an engagement at the Haymarket to play Gloria. They showed her the play,

and she said No.' Now she was wrong to say ' No ' ; but she was right to insist on seeing the book and to refuse the engagement, rather than let herself be seen to disadvantage (as she thought).

" I wish you would suggest a name for yourself in this new play. I cannot very well call the lady Lillah. Provisionally I have called her Andromeda ; but Mrs. Andromeda Dubedat is too long. Here in King Arthur's country the name Guinevere survives as Jennifer ; but that does not hit it exactly either. I have used up such a lot of good names that I am being driven back on the more artificial ones.

" It is not clear what is going to happen to ' John Bull ' and the ' Superman.' They may be exhausted. Six *matinées* of a new play may be needed to freshen the boom and avert ruin. For Heaven's sake do not sign for the run of anything until we have carefully considered the situation. I am writing at the rate of an act a week ; and I know exactly what is coming : there is no abyss to be filled up, as in ' Barbara.' It is just screaming, every line of it.

" V. has, I presume, told you about the dresses. They can be done for a hundred pounds, I think, on *your* back. On anybody else's, eight hundred.

" Yours ever,

" G. B. S."

In October I was playing at the Court in a revival of " Man and Superman." We began rehearsing " The Doctor's Dilemma " and it was produced for a series of *matinées* on November 20th.

As usual, G. B. S. was very particular about the dressing of the play. In the third act, Dubedat, the artist, had to wear a dirty old painting smock of Neville Lytton's covered with daubs of paint. I wore the old tussore frock I had on at rehearsals. No dressing-up, he insisted, for either actors or for the studio—all had to be strictly utilitarian and workmanlike, like the studios of Rossetti, William Morris, and that crowd ! A workshop, not a boudoir. The strictly formal dress of the doctors, with their morning coats and shining top-hats, struck a sharp note of contrast.

After Dubedat's death Jennifer has to appear almost at once in a magnificent costume with a splendid jewelled head-dress which Charles Ricketts had designed for me. Shaw was much criticized for this apparent heartlessness on the part of Jennifer. People thought it unnatural that a woman who loved her husband as Jennifer undoubtedly loved Dubedat should put on her most gorgeous raiment as soon as he was dead. To me, it seemed quite natural ; I was imbued with the spirit of Blake. Blake looks upon death as the great moment when we become really free. Then, and then only, do we achieve real freedom, and so death is no tragedy to me, but a moment for rejoicing that the soul loved is at last set free.

Jennifer was a very difficult, trying part. Her whole character changes so utterly in the epilogue that she is unsympathetic to the audience. As G. B. S. said, the doctors are the play, and Jennifer and Dubedat only second fiddles.

I led a strenuous life, rehearsing constantly while playing twelve times a week. I also went out quite a lot to supper parties, luncheons, and such-like affairs, as well as paying many week-end visits. It's all part of the game and has to be gone through—the sad part is, it leaves you with little time for yourself, your friends, or your books.

I HAD acquired the lease of an old Tudor farmhouse, near Wrotham, in Kent, called Court Lodge. Here I spent every week-end I could, driving down after the theatre on Saturday night, and returning as late as possible on Mondays to London, just in time to get to the theatre.

All day Sundays I spent in the open air, going long walks with my two dogs—my inseparable companions—and working in the garden. I had an Old English sheepdog called Mr. Baxter and a beautiful Newfoundland who rejoiced in the name of Mr. Cooper.

It was glorious to get out of stuffy London —I always came back to my work feeling a new person.

The week-end before the production of " The Doctor's Dilemma " I spent with Mr. and Mrs. Shaw at Welwyn. Arriving very late after the theatre, I found this note waiting for me :—

' Bedtime, 17-11-06.

" Instructions have been given that you are not to be disturbed in the morning until you ring.

" Lunch can be taken in bed if desired.

" If —— desires to play the pianola before retiring, he is requested to select a quiet piece, and wedge down the soft pedal.

" As there is not oil in the lamps to last, I am putting them out and lighting the candles.

" If you want anything, search freely for it. If that fails, shout until somebody wakes and attends you.

" Good-night — Goo-oo-oo-d nahght. Goo-oo-oo-oo-d night, etc., etc., etc.

" G. B. S."

Shaw was, and is, the most thoughtful person for the comfort of his guests.

(A further instalment of Miss Lillah McCarthy's reminiscences will appear next month.)

THE ENCHANTING DUCHESS

ROLLO ARMIGER CUSTANCE POLYNEUX, fifteenth Duke of Bognor, Earl of Ramsgate, and Baron Hammersmith, Companion of the Gilded Axe, Hereditary Grand Seneschal of the Ante-Chamber, glanced over one shoulder and besought of his faithful retainer :—

"Another glass of Moselle, please, Brondesbury."

The stately figure of Brondesbury moved forward two paces, bowed itself at his Grace's left shoulder, and answered gravely :—

"I regret, your Grace, that your Grace has just consumed the last of your Grace's last half-bottle."

The young duke's face fell.

"Is that really so, Brondesbury? It seems only the other day that we ordered a dozen half-bottles. I remember how terribly expensive they seemed, only, of course, as one's obliged to order them from the restaurant——"

"I regret to say such is the case, your Grace. And when I remember that in the time of your Grace's late grandfather, me being then a pantry boy, the cellars at Beaudelys extended for more than an acre, and even the town house contained hundreds of dozens of everything——"

"And now Beaudelys is a country club, and the town house a super-cinema," his Grace commented, bitterly. "I think I will take brandy with my coffee, Brondesbury. My recollection is we still have a little left."

All around brooded the hushed, expensive atmosphere of Plantagenet Court, the latest block of hyper flats, built on the site of the Marquess of Birmingham's one-time residence. Of all the flats in Plantagenet Court, Rollo occupied the cheapest, owing to a succession of death duties, the depreciation of land, and the decay of dukes as a class. In the smallest lock-up of Plantagenet Court's luxury garage, where the mechanics all wear gloves and put on clean overalls twice a day, Rollo's second-hand mass-produced coupé stood shamefacedly. The foreman was wont to turn his head away to avoid the horrid sight when the little thing chuffed deprecatingly past contemptuous chauffeurs in charge of gleaming three-thousand-pound limousines.

Stabbing viciously at a

By

F. E. BAILY

Illustrated by WILTON WILLIAMS

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"What you need to do is to marry money, Rollo," said the Duchess. "I know of the very gal."

microscopic *crême caramel* for he hated *crême caramel*, Rollo considered the dinner menu, printed lavishly in gold on a slab of costly cardboard.

"A spoonful of soup, a scrap of fish, an entrée and this infernal sweet, and they charge eight-and-sixpence for it!" he reflected bitterly. "I'd rather grill a couple of sausages in a chafing dish, only it isn't allowed. One must support their beastly restaurant. The Moselle, of course, is the last straw. I reckoned I still had at least five half-bottles."

He stabbed on at his *crême caramel*, a wistful, tall, broad-shouldered young god of twenty-five, with the typical Bognor good looks, thick dark hair, and those blue eyes which inevitably presented him gagged and bound to the tender mercies of all females. Brondesbury, the ducal ex-butler, fallen, he too, on evil times, performed his classic ministrations as though he presided still over the state dining-room of Beaudelys. His impassive countenance did not blench even when he offered, with coffee, the cheapest gaspers in a coroneted silver box. For Brondesbury it was still Beaudelys, though they happened to be in Plantagenet Court.

Rollo swallowed his coffee and brandy with indecent haste, lit a second gasper, and said:—

"My hat and coat, Brondesbury; I'm going out. The soft black felt hat, please, because I shall take the car. These taxis are ruinous and you can't wear a silk hat in a Smith-Camberley coupé. The roof's too low."

It spoke well for Brondesbury that he brought this vile headgear without a shudder. Rollo accepted it, descended in the gilded lift, acknowledged the salute of the head commissionaire whose income he so envied, walked round to the garage and started his little car. Undaunted by the pitying glance of the white-overalled mechanic who opened the door of the lock-up, and had been educated at Eton, Rollo drove out into the deepening twilight of Piccadilly, through darkling streets to the house of his widowed mother in Lowndes Square.

II.

THOUGH the Duchess of Bognor did not actually wear her coronet in her bath, no one at any time could ever have mistaken her for anything but a duchess. She had a high-ridged, bony nose, a contempt for the accepted forms of line and colour in her clothes, the temperament of a despot, and the manner of a regimental sergeant-major. The only creatures she treated as equals were dogs and horses. These got on very well with her, the ideas of all three being much of a muchness.

A tremulous, elderly female servant who had served the family from girl to woman, admitted Rollo, announced that her Grace was at home, and led him upward by corridors and a staircase that badly needed painting to a great gaunt drawing-room where the duchess, in a green dress trimmed with red, and violet shoes, sat glancing at a copy of *The County Remembrancer and Ladies' and Gentlemen's Gazette*. She put it down and fixed her son with a hawk's eye. She had just dined on cold mutton and rice pudding and feared neither God nor man.

"Well, Rollo," she began, "how are you? You look peaked. You don't get about enough. Here we are in the height of the season, and nobody sees anything of you. Aunt Auchterlochty, Aunt Loamberry, and Aunt Eastfolk are all in Town with their girls and you haven't called on one of them."

Here her Grace referred familiarly to her three sisters, the Marchioness of Auchterlochty, the Duchess of Loamberry, and Lady Eastfolk, wife of the twelfth earl.

"And they aren't likely to," Rollo answered, sitting down and crossing his knees with a reckless disregard for his dress trousers. "That's what I came to tell you, mother. I'm sick of trying to be a duke on fourpence. I've no money to invest, and I can't get a job with a name like mine. I'm thinking of going abroad, to Canada, or South Africa or somewhere, out into God's great wide open spaces where men are men and women women, to plough and sow and reap and mow."

"Rubbish, Rollo," the duchess interrupted with the simple rudeness permitted to ladies of rank. "The Bognors have been losin' money farmin' for generations. What you need to do is to marry money. London's full of pretty girls who are simply stinkin' with it. No name could demand a higher market price than yours. Even if you were in the fifties and full of gout the money would be waiting, but you're not. You're twenty-five and full of oats. I know of the very gal, only of course you'll never get her if you stay pokin' about in that attic of yours."

"Nothing on earth would induce me to marry for money, my dear mother. Who is she?"

"Her name's Marilyn Grey, and her father makes shockproof lipstick. As you can imagine, the man's wealth is fabulous. I've just sold him the last Romney that isn't entailed, the 'Girl Thinking' one. He's going to use it for a poster. He might just as well use a picture of his own gal. The lower classes seem astoundingly good-lookin' nowadays. What he paid will last me my time."

"Not being a Romney," the duke explained, with his rather sad smile, "I don't happen to be for sale, mother. I'm afraid somebody else must marry the lipstick heiress. The reason why I haven't called on Aunt Loamberry and the rest is I simply can't afford to entertain the girls. My dinner alone costs eight-and-sixpence, and this very evening Brondesbury told me that I need more wine. Besides, my clothes aren't fit for a London season and I refuse to owe my tailor any more. So I thought I'd come along and explain to you that my only hope lies overseas. At the moment I rather favour Nyasaland. I hear Bill Robinson-Stevenson is doing very well running transport there."

The duchess banged impatiently on a small table at her side.

"You're a fool like all the other Bognor men before you—always hot and bothered —no stayin' power!" she shouted. "A Bognor would have commanded Marlborough's armies if he'd only hung on for another six weeks. Nobody would ever have heard of Palmerston if the Bognor of that day hadn't left for China because he owned the Derby favourite and it was left at the post."

The duke drew out his cigarette-case, and then replaced it because he knew his mother refused to permit smoking in her drawing-room.

"I shall marry, if I ever marry, for love alone," he explained, dreamily: "She will be a creamy-skinned goddess with red-gold hair and the light of dawn in her eyes. She will be strong-limbed and fearless, and we shall speak soul to soul. That, at any rate, is my impression."

His mother departed suddenly from her tone of authority.

"I'm an old woman, Rollo. I'm turned sixty, and women of my family seldom live to be more than ninety-five. Promise me at any rate you won't leave England before the end of the season."

"Why, of course, mother. After all, a few months are neither here nor there."

"Very well, Rollo. You may leave me now. I think I shall go to bed early tonight. I'm getting old. See that Chivers helps you on properly with your overcoat. She always was a fool."

Touched by this unwonted tenderness on the part of his mother, Rollo kissed her affectionately and departed. Chivers, as he foresaw, quivered round him in an agony of servitude. He passed on to three different dances, each deadlier than the last, with appalling food and drink. They reaffirmed his conviction that the likes of him were on their last legs, and that a party, really to *be* a party, must be given by a merchant prince of some kind or other.

Meanwhile the duchess with alacrity summoned the trembling Chivers and commanded:—

"Bring me that atrocious, noisy, jingling thing one speaks through to other people."

"Your Grace desires the telephone?"

"Of course I do, fool. What else could I mean?"

With suitable meekness Chivers procured a telephone instrument, plugged it into the wall of her Grace's drawing-room, and as desired obtained the number of Mrs. Grey. That lady, though her party was at its height, a real party in the matter of food, drink, cabaret show, and carnival novelties, with, in addition, valuable souvenirs for ladies and gentlemen, left all, such was the magnitude of her Grace's name, and spoke cooingly.

"That gal of yours," interrupted her Grace without the slightest pity. "My son talks of going to Africa. Won't hear of her. Moody, like all young men. Most annoying. He has a flat at Plantagenet Court. You'd better arrange something. My good woman, don't ask me what. I must leave it to your mother's heart. If the girl's attracted, is any trick too dirty? By the way, I made a mistake about my Romneys. There's still another left, 'Phyllis At Her Toilet,' but Mr. Abrahamsky, the American millionaire, is practically camping on my doorstep——"

III.

THE night was very hot. Not a breath of air seemed to stir the stifling atmosphere of London. To Rollo the restricted area of his bedroom, sitting-room, bathroom, and entrance hall appeared intolerable. He had spent a dreadful day calling upon Aunts Auchterlochty, Loamberry, and Eastfolk, and their boiled girls. The boiled-est of all the boiled girls, in his opinion, was the Auchterlochty one. She seemed to have illimitable deer-forests tangled in her dank hair.

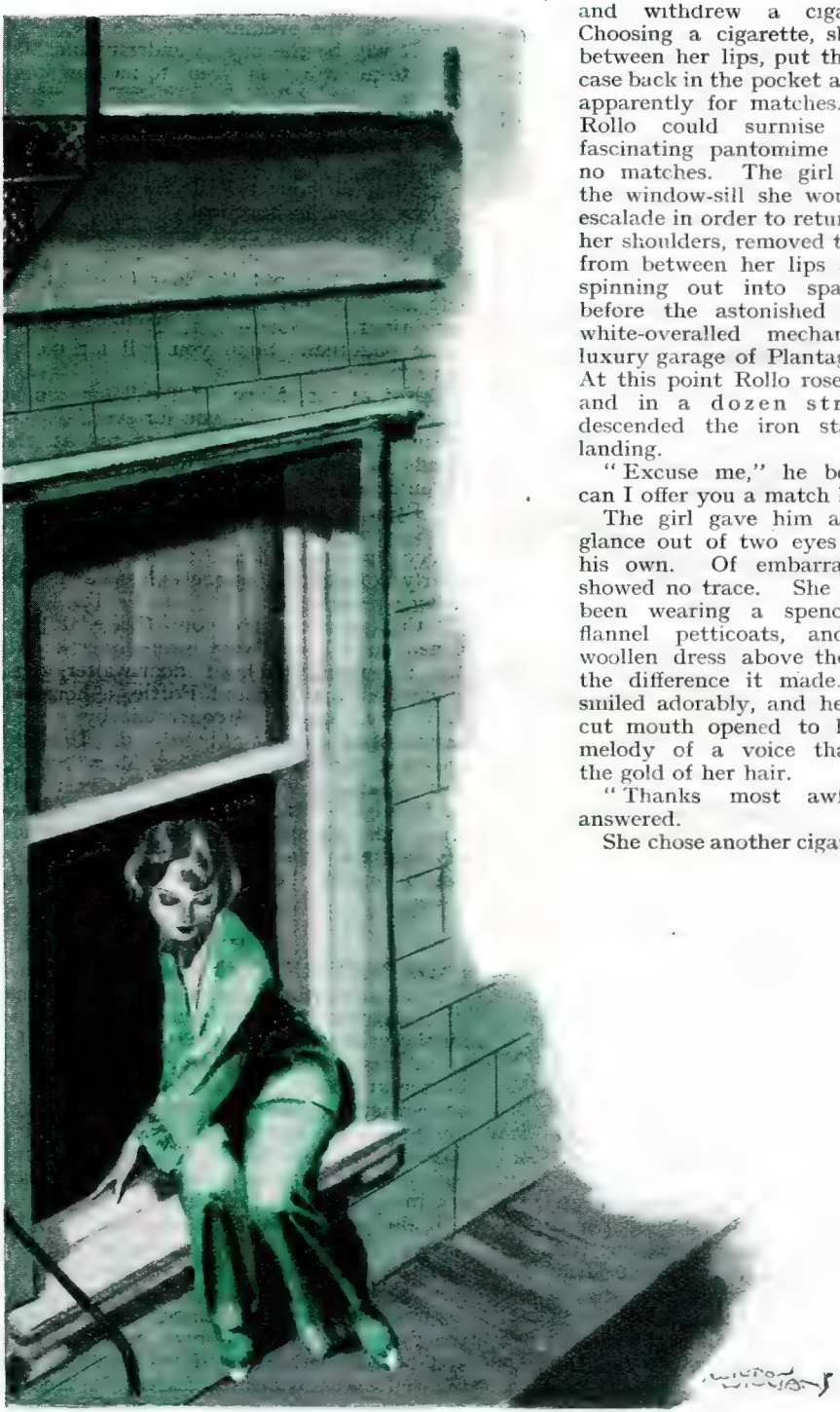
Big Ben across the Green Park had just boomed nine o'clock. Lighting one of his few remaining cigars, Rollo opened his bedroom window and climbed out on to the iron staircase provided in case of fire. Except in the open air he felt it almost impossible to breathe.

Once more careless of his dress trousers, he sat on an open-work iron step, and rested his feet on the one below it. The smoke of his cigar floated upward in the still night. Hardly had he sat there, at peace with all the world, for five minutes, before a silk-trousered leg protruded from a window

of the flat below his, quickly followed by a torso and a second leg. Then a girl emerged on to the landing beneath him, sighed, took a deep breath, and leaned gracefully over the iron railing.

Scarcely daring to believe his eyes, Rollo drank in every line of her divine form. He realized at a glance that she was a creamy-skinned goddess with red-gold hair, very probably with the light of dawn in her eyes. She wore pyjamas of the exact shade of green to contrast with her hair, edged with gold at the opening of the neck, the hem of the trousers, and the arm-holes. Her bare feet were thrust into little gold mules.

Presently she inserted the slenderest of hands into the pocket of the pyjama jumper



and withdrew a cigarette-case. Choosing a cigarette, she placed it between her lips, put the cigarette-case back in the pocket and searched apparently for matches. As far as Rollo could surmise from this fascinating pantomime there were no matches. The girl glanced at the window-sill she would need to escalade in order to return, shrugged her shoulders, removed the cigarette from between her lips and sent it spinning out into space, to fall before the astonished eyes of a white-overalled mechanic in the luxury garage of Plantagenet Court. At this point Rollo rose to his feet and in a dozen strides had descended the iron stairs to her landing.

"Excuse me," he began, "but can I offer you a match?"

The girl gave him an inquiring glance out of two eyes as blue as his own. Of embarrassment she showed no trace. She might have been wearing a spencer, sixteen flannel petticoats, and a thick woollen dress above the lot for all the difference it made. Then she smiled adorably, and her perfectly-cut mouth opened to liberate the melody of a voice that matched the gold of her hair.

"Thanks most awfully," she answered.

She chose another cigarette. Rollo

Hardly had he sat there, at peace with all the world, for five minutes before a silk-trousered leg protruded from a window of the flat below.

struck and held a match. The peach-bloom loveliness of her face almost touched his cupped palms. She inhaled the smoke gratefully, expelled it, removed the cigarette, and went on :—

"I simply had to climb out. I felt I should die cooped up in that flat."

Eagerly Rollo answered :—

"So did I. I've had a foul day, with all sorts of stupid people. It seemed as if I couldn't breathe."

The girl sighed.

"People are simply too stupid, aren't they? Life's just one stupid thing after another. One can never be natural. One's hedged in by all sorts of conventions and restrictions and idiotic ideas. But I'm lucky, of course. I'm having a holiday from life."

"How do you mean?" Rollo asked. It seemed as if the bitterness of death had fallen from him suddenly. He was as much alone with the red-gold goddess on this fire-escape as though they had met on the uncharted, uninhabited plane of an undiscovered planet. She leaned her rounded arms on the iron railing and explained :—

"Someone's lent me this flat. I'm playing at being a poor little rich girl. You of course are really rich. Don't tell me who you are and spoil it."

"I rich?" demanded Rollo of the illimitable universe, and laughed contemptuously. "Why, I've only got a bedroom, sitting-room and bath."

"I can beat you by a bedroom," the goddess told him, "but then of course I couldn't dream of living in my flat permanently. It's a kind of fairy-tale, and one day when midnight strikes I shall have to disappear, like Cinderella."

Drawing a long breath and daring greatly, Rollo implored :—

"Cinderella, won't you tell me your name, your little name that is?"

Very gravely Cinderella answered :—

"My name's Mary. What's yours?"

"Rollo. It's rather a silly name."

"It isn't at all a silly name. There are millions of Marys and hardly any Rollos."

"Do you think I could come into your fairy-tale just a little bit, Mary, or are you frightfully booked up? I've got a car of sorts. Do you like motoring out into the country and having lunch at dear old country pubs that seem pleased to see one and are all dripping with history?"

"I love it if people I like ask me to."

"Am I the sort of person you like, Mary?"

She shook the red-gold head and laughed.

"I've only known you for five minutes. I like you very well so far, Rollo."

The Duke of Bognor cocked an infallible weatherwise eye, inherited from his ancestors, at the evening sky.

"It will be the most wonderful sunshiny day to-morrow. Is your to-morrow very full up, Mary?"

"So far it isn't full up at all."

"I could have the car ready at half-past nine."

"Shall we say ten? It takes a girl ever so long to get her face ready."

"Yours doesn't need any getting ready. It's——"

"Sh!" She put the first finger of her left hand against her lips and offered him her right. "Good-night, Rollo. I'll be quite punctual. Shall you call for me at ten?"

"Not at ten, Mary. I'll call for you at nine fifty and wait for you for ever."

Receiving his early-morning tea at the hands of Brondesbury, Rollo was moved to inquire :—

"By the way, Brondesbury, have you any idea who lives in the flat below mine?"

The manner of Brondesbury became as nearly confidential as the exigencies of the service permitted.

"Curiously enough, your Grace, I happened to ask the very same question of Mr. Rickman, the head floor-waiter, over a glass at the Jug and Bottle, a house, I may say, largely frequented by upper servants in this neighbourhood. He told me that the lady is a Miss Mary Smith, your Grace, to whom the flat has been lent by the rightful tenants, Mr. and Mrs. Orme-Ormerod. Though Mr. Rickman did not say so in so many words, I gathered Miss Smith might be a poor relation, your Grace."

IV.

SOMEWHERE in the depths of the New Forest, while a summer sun shining through the trees made lace patterns on the ground, Mary sat watching Rollo fit together the jigsaw of a luncheon-case by Porter and Pettigrue, of Bond Street. An occasional rabbit lolloped past in the distance, favouring the visitors with a mildly interested stare. Close by the Smith-Camberley coupé dozed, gratefully cooling her hot radiator in the faint breeze.

Rollo placed the luncheon-case in the dickey of the Smith-Camberley coupé, turned back to Mary, removed the cigarette very gently from between her lips, tilted her red-gold head and kissed her. It was the third time she had been out with him and he had never kissed her before. She realized that this alone constituted a record, but then a still more astonishing thing happened. She heard him say :—

"Mary, darling, you're the most adorable

Rollo removed the cigarette very gently from between her lips, tilted her red-gold head and kissed her.

thing in the world and I love you like hell. You've simply got to marry me."

She heard herself answering: "I love you like hell too, Rollo. I think it all began that evening when you were so sweet to me on the fire-escape. But, Rollo, you don't know anything about me."

"You don't know anything about me, either. My history is full of horrors. For instance, I'm the Duke of Bognor and I haven't a bean. But that's of no consequence, Mary, darling. I'm going out to Nyasaland to run transport like Bill Robinson-Stevenson. You and I will pioneer together and raise a race of sturdy sons to inherit the fertile land we won from the trackless wilderness."

Being hazy about geography, like all females, Mary lacked a very exact knowledge of Nyasaland. She thought it might

be in the United States somewhere on the other side of Hollywood, but then again she seemed to remember it had something to do with the Italians. However, she dismissed Nyasaland from her mind, knowing it to be irrelevant.

"It doesn't matter about not having a bean, Rollo; at least it won't when you know the ghastly truth about me. My name's really Marilyn Grey. I'm the spoiled only child of a rich father. I've heaps of money for both of us."

She said it in the contented, sunny tones of a girl who has managed to get something she really wants, and then a sudden change in Rollo's expression alarmed her. His mind had fled back to a conversation with his mother, on which occasion, he remembered, she spoke to him of marriage with a certain Marilyn Grey whose father, a wealthy man, manufactured shockproof lipstick.

Then his mind leaped forward to the kisses he had just bestowed on the supposed Mary Smith. Her perfectly-cut lips were indeed more red than Nature in her wisdom intended, though not like the vermilion that the Moabites find in the mines of Moab, the vermilion that the kings take from them. Obviously therefore she used some species of lipstick. But when his mouth met hers he had experienced none of that slight greasiness, reminiscent of the Kingston By-Pass on a wet day, which young men of experience associate with the ordinary lipsticks of commerce.

This consequently must be the shockproof variety to which his mother referred. The girl was undoubtedly the same Marilyn Grey.

Rollo therefore drew away from her and answered coldly and sternly: "I'm awf'ly sorry, but I could never marry a girl for her money. If I'd known I shouldn't have asked you to marry me. I thought you were just Mary Smith, as broke as I am myself."

"Darling, what difference does it make?"

"It's a matter of principle. My mother's always urged me to marry money and I've always refused. By the way, I believe she knows your mother, and I seem to remember my mother mentioning your name—your *real* name," Rollo underlined, icily. "In the light of all this the coincidence of finding you under an assumed name in the flat beneath mine is—ah!—of some interest."

Before his very eyes he saw Mary change into Marilyn; only the slightest modification—a shade more lift to her chin, the least hint of defiance in that golden voice.

"Well, I'd seen you at the Embassy Club and I wanted to meet you, only you were so stuffy you refused. Mummy tried her best to arrange it for me all properly with the duchess. We even bought a darned old picture of hers, though I'd just as soon hang up something cut out of an illustrated paper. But there was nothing doing, so I had an inspiration and borrowed Lois Orme-Ormerod's flat and did the simple village idiot-maiden stunt and pretended to forget my matches.

"I thought you were frightfully nice that evening and that the stuffiness must have been a lie. But of course it wasn't. At this very moment you're stuffier than the stuffedest stuffed owl in the most Victorian home in Cheltenham or Tunbridge Wells."

"I thought that evening you were just Cinderella, as you said," Rollo declared, bitterly; and she flung at him:—

"Are you really such a fool that you can't tell forty-guinea lounging pyjamas from the sort of thing Cinderella would wear?"

Therefore, heavily and mournfully, Rollo drove her home, but not to Plantagenet Court. He left her on the doorstep of a tall house in Belgrave Square inhabited by her father. She gave him her fingertips and turned her back, and a duplicate of Brondesbury opened the front door and reft her from mortal sight.

V.

MR. ISRAEL GOLDFARB, President of Bigger-and-Better Films, Inc., was giving a party to all his kind friends in London at the Restaurant Magnifique, and making a little whoopee, as he put it. There is something fundamental, phantasmal, and cataclysmic about Bigger-and-Better Films, Inc., and Mr. Goldfarb. They have soared beyond the ken of adjectives. No picture of theirs is ever billed as a mammoth production or colossal offering. They merely announce: "Osa Popula starring in 'Broadway Cradle-Snatchers,' A Bigger-and-Better Picture."

There seemed to be a good deal of champagne about, but Mr. Goldfarb, according to his usual custom, drank cocktails before, during, and after dinner.

Among those present were Mr. and Mrs. Grey, and Marilyn, their daughter, wearing a beautiful green frock cut down to the waist at the back to reveal her creamy-golden skin. She looked like a tall green and gold lily that had got out of bed on the wrong side, and this grieved Mr. Goldfarb because, although sixty, he still found himself just like a child in regard to romance. Moreover, having concluded with Mr. Grey the largest lipstick deal in history, being a year's supply for the young ladies, numerous as the sands of the seashore, who, clad

in panties and brassières, dance up and down flights of steps as a background for the real drama of every Bigger-and-Better picture, Mr. Goldfarb considered himself entitled to an occasional smile from Mr. Grey's daughter.

Therefore he put a fatherly hand on Marilyn's arm and inquired :—

"Lookit, Sweetness, what's eating you ?"

For a moment Marilyn prepared to smite Mr. Goldfarb to the ground. Then she reminded herself that an arm after all is only an arm. Being an old friend of his and also a confirmed talkie-goer, she answered him in his own language.

"I got the Willies," she explained, plaintively. "I got sand in my gears. I don't wanna make whoopee. I gotta crush on a perfectly swell boy and he's thrown me down."

"Gee!" observed Mr. Goldfarb, gravely, "that's tough, sister. Maybe he ain't got something wrong with his eyesight."

"Maybe nothing. He's a duke and he hasn't two bucks to rattle together, not two iron men in the whole wide world. This is one helluva tough country for dukes these days, Mr. Goldfarb. He won't marry me because of all the kale my poppa's got, wads and wads and wads of it. The duke said no girl should stake him to a wedding not if he had to be the last of his line. You cain't wonder I got lead in my dancing slippers, Mr. Goldfarb."

"Sweetness," inquired Mr. Goldfarb, "what do you say if I should put this deal over for you ?"

Marilyn relapsed gracefully into her normal self.

"Oh, Mr. Goldfarb, aren't you simply just too frightfully quaint!"

Mr. Goldfarb drained his sixteenth Martini, and that came-the-dawn look which is never far absent from a sensitive movie magnate drifted into his eyes.

"Lissen here," he commanded. "I'm terribly fond of Mrs. Goldfarb, the whitest woman God ever made, and I'll tell the cock-eyed world He broke that particular mould after He made Mrs. Goldfarb. She's got a swell home on Long Island, and one at White Sulphur Springs, and Beverley Hills, and Miami, and if only she could be here right now how she'd be enjoying herself, poor girl. But you're my lil' ol' sugar, and I gotta see you properly fixed. I got it all doped out in my head just how I could use your duke."

"You can't use my duke, Mr. Goldfarb. He's going to Nyasaland to run transport with a boy-friend called Robinson-Stevenson. Besides, he isn't mine any longer. I handed him the frozen mitt in the New Forest."

"Now, Sweetness, don't let's have no hot air about you handing him the frozen mitt, and can that line of talk about Nyasaland. He ain't going to no Nyasaland. He's going to Hollywood, Cal., as a prominent member of Bigger-and-Better Films organization."

"But he's not in the least like a movie star. He's rather nice."

"I'm not aiming to make him a movie star. I want he should be a kind of social regulator. I want to tell you, Sweetness, we fell down good and hard a coupla times on society stuff."

Mr. Goldfarb's brow grew dark. "There was that coursing meeting where we had the men wear high hats and Prince Alberts, and the women Paris gowns. There was that hunt meet where we had the butler and footmen in velvet knee pants and powered hair feed porridge to the dogs on silver platters. And Al Kriegshaber, our star director, actually shot a guy dolled up like the Prince of Wales dining in his crown, but I cut that out. 'You should know, Al,' I says to him, 'that high-hat folks like the Prince park their crowns meal-times.' I could use your duke to give us the dope on social etiquette and I'm gonna get him. It'll help give tone to our fellow-citizens in the hick towns, and give my lil' ol' sugar right here beside me a boost along the thorny pathway to the altar."

THAT is how Captain Lees-Folkestone, D.S.O. (Retd.), late 110th Lancers, a tall, spare individual with a good leg for a boot, one of Mr. Goldfarb's many secretaries, came to call upon Rollo.

"I am speaking on behalf of Mr. Goldfarb, the eminent American film producer, your Grace," explained the captain in just that voice which curled the manes and tails of the horses of the 110th, when they rode hell for leather, two squadrons together, and didn't care whether they lived or they died. "Mr. Goldfarb has a very important proposition to put forward if your Grace could make it convenient to call on Mr. Goldfarb at the Hotel Magnifique at 2.30 p.m. this afternoon."

Rollo looked up distantly from his writing-table.

"It would be better if you could explain what Mr. Goldfarb wants. My time is very limited. I am on the eve of departure for Nyasaland."

With the lithe grace so peculiar to cavalry officers, Captain Lees-Folkestone sat forward in his chair. Mr. Goldfarb used him exclusively to do business with British gents because cavalry officers are so roguish and ingratiating. With all the *câlinerie* he had learned in youth from

the senior subaltern of the 110th, he explained just what a social regulator was, and how Mr. Goldfarb wished Rollo to fill this responsible position at a salary of five hundred dollars a week for six months certain, with all expenses paid from London to Hollywood and back.

When he had finished, Rollo, who at one time served two years in the 1st. Battalion Bombardier Guards, under "Fritters" Buckhouse, the rudest adjutant even the Brigade ever produced, exemplified the truth of the old saying: "Once a Bombardier, always a Bombardier."

"Captain Lees-Folkestone," he exclaimed, in a voice which brought that officer to attention in front of the writing-table as though back once more on the orderly-room mat, "you are a damned disgrace to your regiment, sir. Not content with having the hell-begotten impertinence to present your loathsome suggestion from your beastly employer to one of the senior dukes of England, you actually dare to offer me money. By God, sir, I will write to the Colonel of your regiment about you. He was a very old friend of my father."

"I beg your Grace's pardon," stammered poor Captain Lees-Folkestone. "It's chiefly a matter of British prestige as far as I'm concerned. You don't realize what terrible things Hollywood makes the British aristocracy do in films. I've seen an earl filmed wearing white spats with his dress clothes."

"The entire Army Council shall hear of this," pursued Rollo, still in his best parade voice. "You won't dare to show your face in a single club in London."

"And the—ah!—money, your Grace, merely represents a token or symbol. Mr. Goldfarb couldn't very well ask you to give up your time for nothing."

At this critical moment the door of the sitting-room opened to reveal Brondesbury. Advancing to the writing-table he halted and said:—

"I beg your Grace's pardon, but might I see your Grace privately for a moment. I should not presume to interrupt your Grace but the matter is of the very gravest importance."

Ignoring Captain Lees-Folkestone altogether, Rollo followed Brondesbury into the lounge hall and closed the door. Brondesbury then began in a low voice charged with emotion:—

"I can only endeavour to rely on the privilege of an old servant in this matter, who has watched over your Grace since your Grace was a child. Perhaps I may be allowed to say that I know the purport of Captain Lees-Folkestone's visit, for as a matter of fact he sounded me first of all as to the propriety of approaching your Grace. Naturally I could give him no guarantees. But, having said so much, may I beg your Grace to do nothing rash or hasty in refusing this American person's offer?

"If I may remind your Grace, when your Grace's ancestor came over with his late Majesty King William the Conqueror to fight at the Battle of Hastings, a certain Gilles Brunpré accompanied your Grace's ancestor, and Brondesbury is merely a curruption, as harchæologists term it, of Brunpré. Your ancestor and mine, your Grace, spoiled the savage Saxons, and if I may so put it, why not let your Grace and me spoil the savage Americans?"

Pausing to control his emotion, Brondesbury continued:—

"No time could be more ripe than the present for laying out a little money judiciously, your Grace. The cellar of the late Mr. Belshazzar, another American millionaire, is in the market. A small non-basement town house with garage in the neighbourhood of Mount Street can be leased for a song, and I have my eye on a small but competent staff. And if by any chance your Grace should think of contracting an alliance——"

Brondesbury named no name, but even as the Witch of Endor conjured up Samuel for Saul, so did Brondesbury conjure up the image of Marilyn in Rollo's mind.

"Well, Brondesbury," he said at last, "how much do you think I ought to stick this low fellow in the way of price?"

"A thousand pounds a week, sir, and not a penny less. We have the situation in the hollow of our hands, sir."

When Rollo had returned to the sitting-room to drive his bitter bargain, Brondesbury drew a piece of paper from the pocket of his waistcoat and gazed at it reverently. It was a fifty-pound note given him as the price of intervention by Captain Lees-Folkestone.

VI.

GIVING her divine face the last, so unnecessary, but so soothing touches of powder before the party, Marilyn felt more than usual her affinity with Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, Peggy Joyce, Mistinguette, and all the rest of the world's more smash-hit sirens, because the encircling movements so deftly initiated were guiding Rollo unconsciously but surely into her arms.

That very morning Mr. Goldfarb had put through to her a farewell telephone call, on the eve of sailing, his voice dripping with the boundless affection of all great movie

"Hullo!" she said. "You look pale, proud and prosperous. Won't you give this little girl a dance?"

magnates for the young, attractive, and beautiful females.

"This is to tell you good-bye, Sweetness," Mr. Goldfarb had crooned. "Everthing's all set for my lil' ol' sugar. I got your duke signed up, and he'll be handling all the dough he can use. The golden bells 'll be ringing in the belfry of the little old church opposite the schoolhouse, like hell they will. It'll work out like a theme song, sister. If it don't I'll go tie a can to myself. You may bet on our theme songs; we try every one out on a bunch of trick psychologists before we start to put them over."

That very afternoon the duchess had rung up Mrs. Grey.

"I hear my son isn't goin' to Nyasaland after all," barked the duchess. "Some American cinema man is paying him a fortune to produce films or something, a Mr. Goldfarb."

"A very great friend of ours," Mrs. Grey had cooed.

"Clever woman," commended the Duchess. "Where would these young men be without us clever women? Don't have

the second Romney if you don't want it, now that Rollo is off my hands in a manner of speakin'."

Picking up the telephone receiver, Marilyn dialled a number and a voice replied.

"Is that you, Brondesbury?" she inquired.

"This is Brondesbury speaking, madam."

"Marilyn Grey here. You're sure his Grace will be at Mrs. Angevin's party to-night?"

"Perfectly, madam. I have put out his Grace's tail coat, and his Grace's chauffeur is bringing his Grace's Rolls-Royce round at nine p.m. His Grace is dining at his Grace's club before going to Mrs. Angevin's."

"Thank you, Brondesbury. I shall never forget all you've done for Mr. Goldfarb and myself."

"You are very kind, madam."

Click!

MARILYN also was dining at her club, the Embassy Club, amid the spirited laughter and gay sallies of her own generation. Presently the young man on duty for the evening escorted her to the house of Mrs. Nigel Angevin, who is, of course, as everyone knows, the smartest, prettiest, most *chic*, and most daring of the young married society women.

"This is too marvellous of you, you divinely quaint thing," exclaimed Mrs. Angevin in greeting. "You'll find Rollo in the cocktail bar looking about as happy as a cat who's been told the tiles are out of bounds."

Indeed Rollo, beautiful in the pearl of new tail coats straight from the caressing shears of Savile Row, looked far from happy. The world was dust and ashes in his mouth, because when Marilyn would have married him his pride and his poverty would not allow it, and now that poverty had become a horror of the past he could not expect her to let bygones be bygones. So he had three drinks quickly and returned to the ballroom to see a red-gold goddess with dawn in her eyes dancing with the young man on duty for the evening. With a generous gesture she fell out the young man and came up to Rollo.

"Hullo!" she said. "You look pale, proud, and prosperous, and I hear you've made a fabulous contract with Mr. Goldfarb. Won't you give this little girl a dance?"

He took her in his arms and they drifted effortlessly away. He saw that her lips, though redder than Nature intended, were not like the bow of the King of the Persians that is painted vermilion and tipped with coral, but he did not care now what lipstick she used or how much money it represented to her. He only knew he also was rich and wanted her very much, so he drew her out into Mrs. Angevin's garden, transformed for the evening into an eastern oasis, and halted her in the shadow of a palm. He could only remember how adorable she had looked in green lounging pyjamas, how sweetly she kissed in the New Forest, how wonderful she seemed now.

"You know," he said at last, "I couldn't marry you when I was poor, and that I'm rich now, and that I want to marry you most awf'ly. Won't you marry me now, Marilyn, darling?"

"Last time I said I would you altered your mind."

"That was because I thought you were Mary Smith, as poor as I was, and then I found you were Marilyn and far too rich for the likes of me as I was then."

Dithering with the situation as a girl does, she asked:—

"Is this final, whatever you find out about me afterwards, that my grandfather drank or my great-aunt lived in sin or I eat onions for breakfast?"

She felt his arms go round her and his mouth on hers. When he had finished kissing her she leaned back her red-gold head and decided:—

"I'll marry you, Rollo, as long as you promise to keep Brondesbury. With Brondesbury to stage manage it even a modern marriage couldn't help being a success."

THE BULL-FIGHT

By

ETHELREDA LEWIS

Illustrated by ILLINGWORTH

OLD Tom, the Ember Farm bull, stood quietly looking over the limestone wall. His tail was switching idly against the humming flies of a mid-August morning.

It seemed to Tom that there was a peculiarly vivid sensation of peace in the morning air. Now and then he stretched out his neck. His wet nostrils dilated as if he asked a question. His mind was certainly at work. He was conscious of his own content.

All the smells and sounds of the hill-top answered Tom's inquiring nostrils. Flowering grasses, vetches, wild pansies—the thick carpet in which his treading feet were hidden—gave out the scent of living hay as the trodden grape yields juice.

Then there was the rich and fertile odour of the midden in the yard, the stream of peat-dark liquid oozing from it as it had for generations, filtering across the cobbles and losing itself in the rank grasses that grew at the foot of the barn wall. Cow-dung and sweet grasses. The richest vegetation of all grew beside this scented stream.

Tom lowered his head, satisfied.

A monotonous tearing of grass reached his consciousness. It was his cows, mates and companions of four years. There had been changes, strange disappearances. On the other hand, calves had been born. These also, many of them, had disappeared. But old Tom remained.

He could easily get to the cows through the gap in the wall.

He looked sideways as if considering the idea. But this peaceful solitude suited him to-day as it so often did.

Larks rose singing from the wet grasses, the vetch, and the yellow pansies. Two plovers cried. They, also, had a nest in the grass, but it was between two low rocks where the cows could not tread.

Seeming to understand all this familiarity, to be reassured by the deeply-scored routine of the morning hours, Tom again lowered his head. Gently he rubbed it against a pointed stone in the unmortared wall. Even the stones of the wall were getting soft and smooth as the sheep-rubbed rocks under the constant drip of the peace of the hill-top.

Strange fossils, like sea-beasts, were embedded in the wall. For here, where stood old Tom, had been the depths of the sea. Fishes had swum where now the small butterflies traced their irregular flight. Where Tom stood Leviathan himself may have shouldered his way through the finny, staring crowd.

One ribbed and scalloped shell in the wall was peculiarly grateful to that part of Tom's forehead where the ruddy hair grew in a whorl, as if some absent-minded finger had thus thoughtfully twirled it.

Yes, old Tom was part and parcel of an ancient scene. Ancient or not it was his, his special field from which he could emerge

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when he wished. Fortunately for him, it was too small and too full of corners for an easy-going farmer to consider worth mowing. A small patch in the middle had been cleared with the scythe, but mowing-grass in seed bordered it the way round.

Especially was it all Tom's own this morning. For he had noticed, to his great amaze, when first he had walked to his familiar point of vantage, that the black bull, his deadly enemy, was not in his accustomed field across the narrow dividing lane.

No, he was not there! Hence this particularly active sensation of peace in the mind of old Tom.

Gentle as a lamb, at peace with his world, the majestic bull, Ember Tom, Tom the Mighty, sniffed the aromatic sorrels and quaking-grass at his feet. His coat shone a ruddy auburn in the mounting sun.

FOR two years Tom had carried on a richly ceremonial feud with Lubin Wildgoose's black bull, Ezra. Like other repressions, the feud grew for lack of active expression. Daily they levelled high-pitched screaming challenges at each other. Daily they sharpened their horns on familiar spots where rock and earth made a suitable medium for the process. At certain intervals they paced rapidly up and down their respective walls uttering low menacing threats. They ran, they galloped, with thunderous hoofs. Tails flew, eyes burned red, and nostrils blew.

This feud had had its genesis on a day when the black bull escaped through an open gate and made its way into old Tom's zenana. Tom, at the moment of his arrival, being asleep at the far end of the field, only awoke with the chorus of agitated lowings from his fluttered and perhaps flattered ladies. There had not been time for Ezra to play the conquering Don Juan. For, just as Tom arose in his heavy wrath, Ned Seedcroft, the Ember cowman, came running with a stick and chased the black interloper out into the lane and in at his own gate, the gate of the farm of Lubin Wildgoose. Tom, meanwhile, expressed his feelings by unprecedented pawings, snortings, and bellowings; while clustered together in the corner of the field the cows were making the most extraordinarily feminine display of nerves, excitement, and intense interest in the situation.

Since that day Tom had never felt quite so sure of his own prestige. By a natural reaction to the laws of psychology, his protective gallantries towards his wives were for some days redoubled.

Black Ezra was apparently equally annoyed at the failure of his cave-man escapade. The will to combat was constant between them: constant because unsatisfied. The technique of their long-distance battle became more and more elaborate, like modern artillery.

But now this sudden cessation of hostilities, owing to the absence of his enemy, almost made old Tom light-headed. He could not be at all sure that he had not won the battle at last.

In the meantime a blessed sense of peace, of peace with victory, at first flooded all his being. But later in the morning he became conscious that, with the loss of the daily ritual, something tonic had also disappeared. He felt dull and overfed, like a colonel who has missed his golf for a week. There was nothing to talk about boastfully.

Tom was learning the human lesson that halcyon days need just a little edge of strife to complete their perfection. Had Tom been a reader of Browning, as befitted his age and appearance, he would then have quoted to himself more or less correctly:—

"Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,"

probably throwing up his head like a man walking the road and snatching his hat off for conscious joy of his tramping feet.

But being only old Tom, the Ember bull, he stood in dreamy thought chewing the cud of new sensations.

FURTHER disturbing sensations were lying in wait for Tom. Ember Farm had decided to sell the big bull at the next market at Cranniford.

It were a bad year for farmers. That it were. Nowt but ill-luck ever sin th' last moock-spreedin'. And th' young bull, Dooglas, were coomin on nicely. Over there, t'other side o' th' hill, with two-three young cows of his own. Two of 'em, Mary and Pola, were in cawf areddy, danged if they were'na.

Yes, and as Douglas, called after a famous cinema star much admired by the lads of the village, would never make the price his thoroughbred sire could still make, the old bull would have to go.

Lubin Wildgoose, too, was struggling with his debts after the bad season.

Soon after midday of this day of sensations, old Tom was startled to see Ned Seedcroft come into the field. He was walking very slowly, instead of running and calling.

Perhaps it was Sunday again. But no, the wise bull knew better than that. He stood quite still, staring with surprise, until Ned was half-way across the field. And then, being a bull of good manners and having a deep unspoken affection for the cowman, he advanced with an air of polite inquiry.

Turning the corner suddenly, Ember Tom found himself face to face with Ezra, the black bull, his enemy.

" 'Ere, Tom——" said Ned, and produced a handful of long fragrant clover from behind his back. " 'Ere, owd feller-me-lad——"

Ned sat heavily down, dug his heels into the grass, and watched the bull eating the clover in the delicate, sniffy, ladylike way of bulls.

" Thou'st got to go, Tom," said Ned, sombrely. He brought out a spotted handkerchief and without shame wiped his eyes on it and blew his nose.

He blew such clarion blasts that Tom started nervously.

" Tha' great owd silly, 'twere only a man blowing his nose. 'Tweren't Ezra, if that's what you're thinkin'. He's got to go, too, they tell me, but I'm hoping 'twon't be to-morrow."

Ned sighed. The bull came near and nosed the back of his neck with clover-scented, lightly-feeling nostrils.

Ned put a hand up over his shoulder and scratched the whorl of hair on Tom's forehead.

The two men loved each other as they loved their land.

THE next morning old Tom was kept chained in the barn long after the cows had been milked and sent into the fields. Long after Ned had brushed his auburn coat and polished his hoofs and horns he still was left alone.

Had Ned forgotten him ? He kept a dignified silence as long as he could and then mooed low and softly.

Just to remind his old friend.

Presently Ned came across the yard wearing his Sunday clothes and polished leggings. His face was scrubbed pink, his fair side-whiskers stood out fluffily.

Yet it was not Sunday.

" Time's oop, lad," he said. " Time's oop."

He led the bull out into the lane instead of opening the gate into his own field.

Tom was profoundly disturbed. The mellow walls of habit, which he had regarded as solid, were apparently not to be depended upon.

He wanted to be standing on his old vantage spot, watching his enemy. He wanted to hear the comfortable tearing sound of his feeding wives, to be rubbing his head on the stones.

He stared round nervously, and turned as if to re-enter the gate.

" Coom on, Tom," said his friend. " What art moidering abart ? "

The friendly slap on his flanks reassured him. He stood for a minute as if hesitating between his ideas and the man's, then decided to trust his friend.

Besides, there were some remarkable vistas of an eatable nature opening out. The lane was an ancient pack-horse thoroughfare across the tops of the hills. The narrow strip of white road was bordered by a broad band of most luscious tall grasses, wild herbs, and flowers which are not the everyday fare of cattle. High up to the old wall they banked themselves in fragrant variety.

Tom stretched out his muzzle and began tearing at astonishing tit-bits. At the same time he unconsciously obeyed Ned's propelling hand on his flanks. He walked on quietly.

Tom was not ringed. Rarely on these high farms did the bull descend to highways and villages. So that, unless an animal had a vicious temper, an ordinary lead of leather attached to another thong encircling the broad neck was enough for control.

Man and bull walked harmoniously together. Ned was feeling better about the sale of the bull. The sadness which clings about a home and the home lands had evaporated with the first few steps of this Tuesday-morning jaunt into the great world. Like Tom, he was tasting fresh rich food with every step along the airy high road.

Fresh woods and pastures new was the unspoken thought in Ned's mind.

And at Cranniford they'd be getting ready for th' Wakes. They did say there was a feller down from Loondon going to make pictures of it seemingly. Staying at the King's Head with a regular to-do of cameras. A bit soft-like, seemingly. Ran after Mrs. Doxey's geese when they set out for t' pond in the morning.

The lane began to dip steeply down into the village. The rich grasses disappeared. Nettles abounded, clustering between outhouses and pigsties of scattered cottages.

Tom suddenly realized that he had come very far from his base. Very, very far from the comfortable sound of that crop-cropping, the sighs and tail-whiskings of his household.

He stopped and uttered a low question to his friend. To which Ned replied, " Nay, Tom, thou'st got to go now, sithee. Oop, lad ! Tha' mun be a man."

A FEW steps farther down the lane Jim Grattan's collie rushed out, frantically barking round the bull's forefeet and swinging muzzle.

Tom became less and less of a man. His philosophy was not adequate to carry him for a day through the busy haunts of humans. He made a vicious lunge at the dancing collie.

Still lower down the lane, where the cottages were now a continuous row, a butcher's cart disturbed him. There was a shocking odour from it which frightened him badly.

He plunged, caught Ned in a careless moment, and was off down the lane, shaking out as he trotted a high-pitched lowing scream of alarm and dawning anger.

Yes, Tom wanted to go home so badly that it actually roused anger. He wanted to be in his own field. He wanted——

Turning the corner suddenly into that spacious meeting-spot of several lanes and roads, surrounded by ancient houses and known as " down at th' Cross," he found himself face to face with Ezra, the black bull, his enemy.

Now if there is one thing in this cross-grained life more satisfying than another it is to be provided, in moments of rage, with an enemy.

Ezra also, in that agitating jolt from his comfortable quarters down the breakneck lane which connects the Lubin Wildgoose lands with the village—the lane called th' Clatterway, which emerges at the back of the church—had lost a good deal of his manly bearing. He, too, longed for home and the soothing company of wives. His nerves were all on edge.

Young Lubin, a board-school stripling of eighteen, designed by an up-to-date Nature for the garage rather than the farm, had not had too easy a time with Ezra. At this last blow of Providence, the apparition of the Ember bull, loose and snorting at alarmingly close quarters, was more than his courage could face. After making a few frantic tugs at Ezra's rope he let go, and retired to a cottage gate just at the moment when Ned Seedcroft, laughing at his own carelessness, hurried round the corner with the calm professional assurance of an experienced cowman of thirty-five.

But it was a startling tableau, even for him. The two bulls faced each other with immense and growing satisfaction. After a long pause of pure astonishment, the possibilities of this meeting were beginning to fill their heads like an angry swarm of bees.

With a regal air old Tom began the primitive ritual of snorting and pawing the ground. Ezra, no whit behind him in matters of etiquette, also bowed his great horns to the ground and struck his black hoofs commandingly on Mother Earth.

"Drive your bull off, Young Lubin!" Ned bellowed at the pale youth. "What art doing in that garden? They'll be feyghting afore we——"

He made a grab for the leather thong that trailed from Tom's neck, hanging on desperately for a second.

But he was too late. The moment of impact was due. Now, with eyes growing bloodshot, the bulls charged forward to the classic encounter of their dreams. Their heads met with a thud that could have been heard at the Rectory windows.

No longer were they homesick, nervous, uxorious, overfed, brushed and combed begetters of stock. They were warrior leaders of the ancient herd, fighters for headship, fighters for browsing lands, for the drinking-place.

Ned picked himself up from his sprawl and ran to a neighbour's yard for a hayfork.

The sight or sound of a man running is always a stimulant in village life. In addition to this attractive sound, there were strange snortings and tramplings.

Heads were poked out of door and window. Leisurely figures emerged from the blacksmith's, from the shiny, smug Co-operative Stores, from the King's Head.

By a most happy chance, Miss Kirkland had just let her brood out of school for the first recess.

The rumour of "summat on down at th' Cross" spread like wildfire, as it has done any time in the last four centuries or so. From every lane and alley that opened on to the considerable if irregular space, somewhat like a misshapen market square, of which the fine fifteenth-century cross was the centre, hastened that magic, that olden creature, the Crowd.

Down the King's Head's extremely steep stairs leapt that Cockney of Cockneys, Mr. Edgar Simmons (of Camberwell, S.E., but on his cards it only read "Representing Imperial Films Co., Ltd., High Holborn, London").

Mr. Edgar Simmons had also heard mysterious noises when in the act of packing his suitcase to visit a village where he had heard there were ancient well-dressings. Like the born villager that every Londoner is at heart, he obeyed the primal instinct to join the crowd.

Pushing his way through the group at the door he took one look round the arena, stood spellbound for ten seconds, and then, almost whimpering with excitement and fear of losing something, he leapt back up the oil-cloth precipice for his camera.

MEANWHILE, our two heroes, content, in the first delirious joy of the clash, simply to engage in a preliminary push of war, husbanding their rage as if it were too precious a thing to spend riotously, were completely unconscious of the fact that their hides were being assailed by hayforks, rakes, hoes, spades, and other implements of an agricultural people.

An ever-gathering army, under the leadership of Ned Seedcroft, followed the classic group in its preoccupied mazy dance over the old grey cobbles.

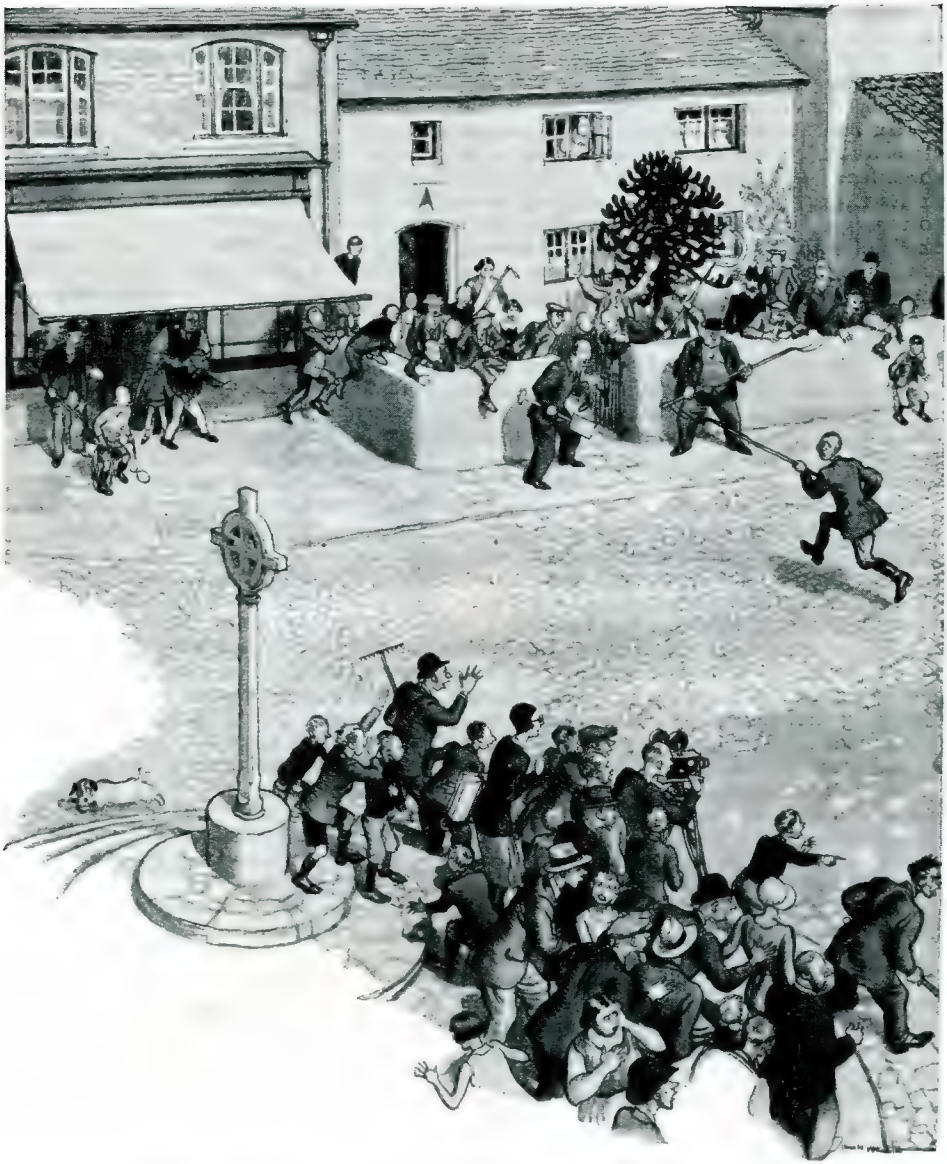
Non-combatants lined the arena, but a few, having the mental equipment and crazy determination of first-nighters, had made for the steps of the Cross. Amongst these, as the society columns say, were the bigger lads from Miss Kirkland's classes and an American lady artist who happened to be sketching the fine old stone gables of the King's Head, and had already established herself on the slopes of the Cross.

Several circular, worn steps ran lightly and symmetrically up the Cross itself, a slender, elegant column of the height of a man.

To the spectators on the grand stand was now added the breathless Mr. Edgar Simmons of Camberwell and High Holborn.

Events had always gravitated to the Cross. Starving weavers had shouted their wrongs from its steps, their curses on the machine. Witches, young and old, had been baited there, wild, fanatical sermons had been cried aloud by Puritan and by monk, lepers and the plague-stricken had found their food waiting for them on the bottom step. The children had made it their own in all ages.

The Bull-Fight

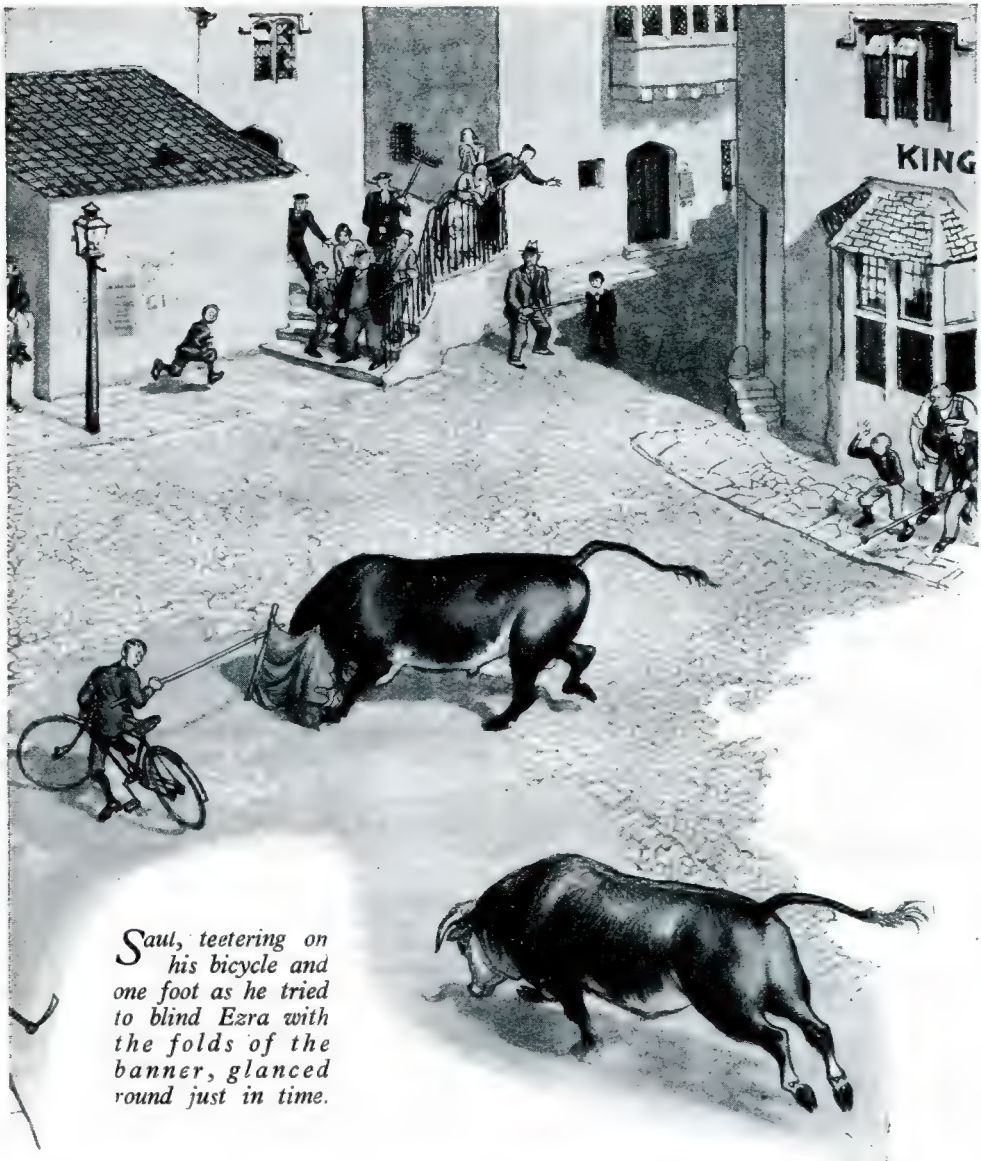


To-day, with dignified versatility, th' owd Cross offered itself as grand stand at a bull-fight.

Edgar Simmons had selected it as a strategic point from which he could get a grand circular view of the arena, providing him at the same time with a means of immediate retreat. Camera in hand he began, with feverish joy, to follow the picture before him.

" Owe's like organ-grinder wi'art th' little moonkey," had been said of him in disparaging tones in the King's Head taproom. Now his antics gave additional zest to the fight between Ember Tom and Wildgoose's Ezra. With an artist's childlike expression of joy he turned and twisted, twisted and turned, accommodating his camera to the entranced oblivious bulls.

From the moment of impact, the ruddy Tom had had the advantage. He was bearing his enemy backward, at the same time trying to twist his head. His short horns were rammed under Ezra's long ones. With the advantage of the lower grip, as in a Rugby scrum, he was trying to get in under the other's guard and lift him from his feet.



Saul, teetering on his bicycle and one foot as he tried to blind Ezra with the folds of the banner, glanced round just in time.

But although Tom was the heavier weight, Ezra was agile. While he was pushed backward he still kept his body taut and in a straight line with his head. Ember Tom wrestled mightily, using the purchase his horns gave him to twist Ezra's head and break that taut line.

But the black bull had the stronger neck. He kept his head in position to cover his body. Ember Tom was not to have it all his own way.

The fight was moving. The bulls were perhaps twenty feet away from the first point of onslaught.

If only those fools wouldn't stop them too soon! Edgar Simmons could have screamed at them.

At the same time, the fools were certainly assisting to create a picture. Ned Seedcroft's army was swelling with such rapidity that there were moments when the combatants were hidden altogether. Certainly it all made variety, but the idea simply mustn't be overdone.

With speechless rage, Edgar Simmons heard an order shouted to "Fetch th' fire engine."

Several schoolboys rushed off in obedience

to the call, cuffing each other jealously as they disappeared round the Oddfellows' Hall corner.

Another knot of boys, having learned something from Tom Mix and other heroes of the West, went off shouting for what they called " one o' these 'ere lassers " to throw at the bulls. Clothes-lines were torn down from yards and gardens.

For some time Ned Seedcroft had handled his hayfork in gentlemanly warfare. He could not risk disfiguring either Tom or Ezra when on their way to be sold at the market.

" Men, we munna wound 'em," he kept urging upon his regiment. " We mun startle 'em, like."

" The flat o' that spade, an' I'll thank you kindly," he reminded 'Diah Kirkland.

The man with the wooden hayrake was trying to catch it on Ezra's big horns, to give him " a bit of a jerk " from behind.

While each man was happily engaged, working out a scientific system for his particular weapon, the bulls suddenly started apart.

This unprofessional conduct was no cessation of the fight. Although pushed backward by Tom's enormous weight, Ezra had kept his feet. His full weight was still evenly held behind his horns.

Now both bulls opened their eyes, which had been closed with that protective instinct which gives fighting bulls a strange ecstatic appearance.

In the scrum Ned's arm had been roughly pushed. His hayfork gave an accidentally sharp prick on Tom's flank. For a moment Tom drew back in astonished rage.

The confusion resulting from this sudden interval was highly satisfactory to Edgar Simmons and the little group safely out of the way on the Cross. There was a general stampede, and one or two casualties in the way of a heavy fall amongst the armed pacifists.

Manipulating his hayfork as a defensive weapon, Ned Seedcroft stood his ground alone, although he was in danger of an attack from the black Ezra should he descend for a moment from his noble preoccupation with his enemy.

Unfortunately, in this first round, Tom's trailing leathern lead had been trodden and broken. There was only a very short piece in the neighbourhood of Tom's ear which could be seized. But Ezra's rope, being soft, was still intact.

" Young Lubin, tha' great gormey, catch 'owd of your beast, wilt'a ? "

But Young Lubin was not of the stuff of heroes. He was still leaning on the gate where he had retired when the trouble began.

" Catch 'owd tha'sen ! " he retorted in a thin, vainglorious voice.

Such maddening irresponsibility angered Ned. He made an unpremeditated vengeful prod on Ezra's flank.

Drawn by the pain of this attack from his watchful amaze at his enemy's tactics, the black bull swung round to meet the new danger.

A thrill of pleasurable excitement, bordering on horror, spread round the arena. Ned'd have to feyght for it now and no mistake.

He did, and in a most gallant manner. Fencing the bull off with the sharp curved fork, he began a retreat towards gates and doors.

Once or twice the bull got one horn between the two prongs and pushed. Ned pushed too, but was not so good at it.

Things had a very dangerous look.

There was an uncertain movement forward amongst the men who had retired with their weapons.

But there was Ember Tom to be reckoned with. Naturally enraged at this unmannerly digression on the part of his enemy, he was pawing the ground and snorting in imperial fashion. The angle of his tail was distinctly interrogating.

Now, amongst the schoolboys on the Cross, Saul Burman, the tailor's son from Leicester —" them aliens," as they were called—had streaks of knowledge and flashes of imagination not implanted in him in any board school. His father was a reader and a talker, as are many tailors : a town bird who had

retired into the country for a time to evade the police.

Something in the classic grouping of a man and a bull set an idea moving in Saul's brain. Pictures he had seen somewhere—the man with the red cloth tossing in his hands.

His father's cottage, the window of which held no group of geraniums and a Bible, as was the custom, but a half-made coat basted and chalked encouragingly, was in the safest corner of the arena.

Soon a dark, lightly-built boy was sprinting across the open space without consulting anybody.

The cottage was empty, although his father's bicycle, on which he had trundled many a weary mile for orders, was leaning against the low garden wall.

Everybody was at the bull-fight.

Saul ran up the steep stairs to his father's bedroom, and presently hurtled down again carrying a crimson processional banner, complete with pole. On the banner was the inscription :—

FORWARD, COMRADES!
DOWN WITH THE CAPITALIST!
UP WITH LABOUR!
FOLLOW THE RED FLAG!

Saul tried feverishly to loose the banner from the pole, but the ends were hopelessly entangled. He ran out with it as it was, pole and all.

Man and bull were still at perilously close quarters, the red bull still pawing and snorting as if waiting for a suitable object of attack.

Could he get there in time or should he——?

The bicycle! Thought and act were simultaneous. Saul was off, bumping across the crazy cobbles of the hilly arena.

Like many other town-bred boys, Saul was an expert performer on the push-bike, and it was not very difficult to carry the pole. Holding it in his right hand, as a mounted knight carries his lance in the joust, he charged forward to the place of action.

Edgar Simmons, who at this new and dangerous turn of events had been torn between the desire to secure a unique picture and the guilty suspicion that something ought to be done to save a man from being gored to death, had for some time been ignoring the loudly-expressed opinion of the American lady, that " Any *man* would go and fetch a gun." He desperately ignored the taunt. The schoolboys, of stout country stock, derided such an urban idea.

" Shoot th' bull ? She says we mun shoot th' bull ! Don't yew do it, mester. Farmer 'll take th' law of yer."

All but one boy joined in the chorus of indignation. Little Sam Holmes, with overwhelming longing in his eyes, edged up to the photographer and said, timidly :—

" Yer can go an' get a gun if yer want to, mester. And let me hold th' box for yer, please ! *I'll* make th' picture for yer ! They let me grind th' coffee at the Stores. *Please*, mester ! "

These distractions ceased abruptly with the appearance in the arena of Saul Burman.

Edgar Simmons made a fervent resolve, to give the boy on the bicycle five shillings whether his subsequent movements were to be for weal or woe.

Neither Ember Tom nor black Ezra was familiar with the bicycle or with the chosen colour of the proletariat. When Saul tilted up in mediæval style and inserted a confusing mass of inflammatory colour between Ezra and Ned Seedcroft, the bull, in obedience to the encouraging suggestions on the banner, forgot his objective and proceeded to follow the flag.

Ember Tom had also caught sight of some new interfering influence in his private feud with another gentleman. With an enraged bellow he started forward, head down and tail up, to oust the officious intruders once for all.

Warned by the bellow, Saul, teetering on his bicycle and one foot as he tried to blind Ezra with the folds of the banner, glanced round just in time to drop the pole with a shout of horror and wheel madly after the retiring Ned to the nearest gate.

Unfortunately, in hurling the pole from

him, the banner had spread itself over the head of Ezra, and there it remained, caught by the entangled cords on one of his horns.

It was then that Ember Tom began to follow the flag with furious enthusiasm.

At the same moment, as something in the nature of a side-show, Young Lubin burst into a loud sniffle of tears.

" Me feyther'll kill me if th' bull's hurt! Ember'll kill him now. He's going to kill our Ezra! If you don't get your beast off, Ned Seedcroft, I'm going to get a gun. Me feyther'll kill me if——"

He ran distractedly from gate to gate, shouting thinly for the loan of a gun.

" Stirred theself at last, 'ast 'a ? " said Ned, bitterly. " If Tom's shot it'll be your feyther'll pay, young feller-me-lad. There's nowt now but to let 'em feyght it through."

He leaned sombrely against the low garden wall. His friends commiserated with him on the ruin of his Sunday clothes. But they were relieved at his ultimatum. Ned Seedcroft were reyght, danged if he weren't.

This being established, every man settled with an air of relief to watch the fight with a clear conscience. Only Young Lubin could still be heard, thinly crying for a gun.

SNORTING now with fear of what he carried on his horn, Ezra made blind rushes, first in one direction, then in another, in the manner of a dog having a cannister lodged on his head. Had it not been for the baffling behaviour of the flag-pole in its mad gyrations, Ember Tom would have got in a dangerous wound in Ezra's side. The pole kept tripping him up, confusing the natural uses of his four feet.

But, stumbling and bellowing up and down the arena, Tom followed the flag in a white heat of rage.

In their wild movements the bulls approached the Cross. Watchers on the grand stand became restive. Two boys fled with cries across the cobbles to safety, while the bulls were so savagely engrossed with one another.

The American lady mounted to the topmost step. There she bore a bizarre resemblance to some picture of an impending martyrdom, until she unstrapped her folded sketching umbrella ready for defence.

" But of course they could never mount these steps, could they ? " she said, pleasantly, as she busied herself.

" Mount th' *steps ?* I seed a bull at Cranniford market go oop flight o' steps into Lawyer Brigg's office. Doors were all locked in his face until they got 'im down again."

" There's no doors 'ere," said little Sam Holmes, dolefully surveying the possibilities.

Edgar Simmons, with that new heroism demanded of humans by the cinema, remained at his post until the bulls were within two or three yards. Then, instead of mounting the Cross, he began a circular movement round the foot of the steps, somewhat like an organ-grinder following hopeful windows.

The fighters were so deeply engrossed that they had not yet noticed Mr. Edgar Simmons, representing Imperial Films Company.

Only when, at last, the black bull unexpectedly freed himself from the hindering cords of Socialism did the valiant little Cockney spring for the steps. But, terrier-like, he did not let go of his job.

" Here, Jimmy, you can catch hold of that umbrella! Hold it over me while I reload. You'll excuse me commandeering your property, madam ? "

Bursting with importance, little Sam Holmes, stuffed with the courage born of spectacular usefulness, held the gay-striped umbrella close down over Edgar Simmons's shoulders. Cosily, secretly, they sat together on the steps while the operation of reloading was performed.

But black Ezra, in a state of shattered nerves, caught sight of those unfortunate gay stripes, and mistook them for further interference with his private life.

The clash of horns again ceased.

With an ominous pawing of the ground both bulls eyed this new hindrance to a happy warrior.

It was an acute moment for the group marooned on the Cross.

The American lady screamed faintly.

" Owe let out a pretty screet," was said of her in the King's Head taproom that evening. And that described it very exactly. For it was a genteel New England scream of which no daughter of America need feel shame. Forgetful of sacrilege, she mounted to the last small circular foothold of the Cross itself and clung desperately to its shaft.

" Wey mun dodge 'em round th' steps now! " cried one of the boys. " Keep away from th' top, lads."

But Edgar Simmons, with the genius born of artist madness out of commercial ambition, had a better idea. Twirling the dazzling umbrella slowly round, the better to fascinate the eyes of the bulls, he rolled it gently down on to the cobbles at their feet. Calmly he set the machinery of the reloaded camera.

The bulls eyed the approaching phenomenon with apprehensive rage. When a puff of wind tooled the umbrella gently away over the cobbles they swung after it in unison, their heavy heads thudding together over the frivolous dancing object.

In a few seconds the breeze dropped. The umbrella took a casual contemptuous stand.

While Ember Tom stepped into it with his indignant hoof black Ezra ripped it, mangled it, with annihilating fury.

Failing to toss the bright mass into the air, Ezra lunged again upon his enemy, who was no doubt responsible for this as for other insults.

The battle was resumed. But it had less of tenacious hold and more of a sparring match about it. As if dissatisfied with his new attack, Tom suddenly drew back his head and banged it forward from a different angle. Again and again he repeated the manœuvre.

Ezra's black cheek and neck began to show spots of blood.

Both bulls were blowing hard, scattering the dust before their nostrils.

Tom grunted and gasped as he buckled up his long body for another vicious butt and twist. Then the two would slacken again into the push-of-war. They leaned against each other, forehead to bony forehead.

But once more there came a mysterious interference in the legitimate duel of two enemies. The fire-engine was being hurried on the scene, as it had been on the occasion when, on the same spot, Greatorex's new bulldog had nearly killed Farmer Wagstaffe's collie that was so knowing with the sheep.

There being no water system in the village, the fire-engine was but a simple affair. It was a water-barrel, hung upright between two cart-wheels and propelled by a long shaft from behind. A primitive pumping apparatus served mildly to accelerate the issue of water from a hose-pipe some thirty feet long, ingeniously attached to the bung-hole. The weak spot in its working was that the filling of it required a constant stream of buckets, passed by hand from the nearest water-tap or from the stream of sparkling water that ran past the doors of the cottages.

When Ned Seedcroft saw the fire brigade, already some twenty strong, come round the King's Head corner at a brisk trot, he felt heartened-like to reassemble his armed company. He visualized them now as a bodyguard to the fire brigade.

"Keep th' bulls off of 'em, like," was his simple way of putting it.

Thus the various participants in the bull-fight assembled in force for a last and grand finale. Amongst them was Saul Burman, who was trying to forget the hiding he would get from his father for the destruction of the banner.

Edgar Simmons was beside himself with concentrated excitement. Afraid that he had not enough spools in his pocket, he bribed little Sam Holmes with the promise of half a crown to run over to the King's Head for his attaché-case.

It was a dangerous, a glorious mission.

Sam hesitated. He had never had a larger coin than a shilling for his very own. And the Wakes was very near, with its gingerbreads and merry-go-rounds.

"They're too busy to notice a little chap like you. Look at 'em now, kid!"

True, the two bulls were re-engaged. Interlocked as if nothing but death should them part. No more ridiculous diversions. This was war.

It was now black Ezra's turn to do the pushing. Tom's strength had been wasted too freely on his series of powerful lunges. He had grown a little wilted, a little careless.

There came a moment when he drew back too far from his attack. As he lunged forward Ezra had cleverly dropped on his knees, horns near the ground.

Ember Tom's attack broke over him. In a second Ezra locked his horns under his enemy's, and the wrestling began again.

Now it was Tom's fate to be pushed backward as Ezra pressed his weight against him.

EMBOLDENED by their terrific preoccupation, Sam suddenly darted off across the perilous spaces, shouting with horror but not daring to look behind.

This new fierce absorption of the bulls made it easier for the proper disposal of the fire brigade, under the control of its captain, Lionel Bunting, and their bodyguard under Ned Seedcroft. Two strings of buckets were established, one from the open stream and a shorter one from the old pump near the Cross.

Lionel Bunting, a sensational young man with a yellow forelock curled upward over the peak of his gaudily-checked cap, was in his element.

"I'm never so 'appy as when I'm commanding men," he was once heard to say before a taproom audience after a haystack alarm.

"Takes after 'is mother, seemingly," said an old man, unkindly. "Lily Bunting was a fair little generalissimo in 'er time."

It was well known that Lionel was a love-child. No man born in holy wedlock would have been given such a name. So silly-like.

The romantic Lionel was now to make the discovery that it is one thing to command men, another to create any impression on two fighting bulls taking the chance of a life-time.

Amid the ensuing scene of moil and turmoil, the bellowed commands of Lionel, of drenched and panting men and clashing buckets, the shouts and antics of the defending bodyguard, Tom and Ezra fought

on as if nothing more than a sudden thunder-shower were descending upon them. So wrapped were they in the ecstasy of battle that first one and then another of Ned's bodyguard ran in under the hose to inflict a prod on hindquarters.

Under the pressure of these mosquito bites, and with black Ezra still holding the advantage, the bulls were well on the move.

Ned seized the advantage. He shouted, " Neighbours, we'd be best to steer 'em into Parson's Paddock. Let 'em feyght it out there. Shoot th' gate on 'em."

So to Parson's Paddock, by inches, the combatants were manœuvred by water and by steel, and by black Ezra's engrossed volition. Now and then during the twenty minutes' process, the ever-gathering crowd of men scattered hastily when the bulls threatened a new tactic.

PARSON'S PADDOCK was a pleasant field between the churchyard and the Rectory garden. Its gate opened from a short lane leading to the Rectory from the Cross. It was a delicate operation guiding the bulls into this narrow aperture, that lay at first between cottages. Edgar Simmons, in a dream of joy, followed closely, and attended by the faithful hero, Sam Holmes, found it difficult to get a good shot at such close quarters, what with the streams of water, the jostling of the water-carriers, and the general air of wild festa the incident was taking on. Presently he found himself so pressed against the wall of the churchyard that he climbed over and followed the procession by jumping from grave to grave. He stumbled on, oblivious of the scandalized protests of the vicar, who at the moment happened to be locking the vestry door before returning to his study.

Holy Oxford accents fell unheeded on the little artist. He stumbled on, not even hearing them.

" And you—Sam Holmes! Don't you know that trespassing on this sacred ground is forbidden ? "

Little Sam, with a half-crown in his pocket, defended their action fearlessly, joyfully.

" It's for t' cinema, sir. We aren't trespassers ; it's cinema ! "

As if to know all were to forgive all.

Fuming, the vicar followed his prey.

At last the bulls were edged, prodded, drenched, through the gate into the pleasant field, now bright green and shaven after haymaking. Front seats were taken in the new arena. Every available inch of wall bordering graveyard, lane, and Vicarage orchard was occupied by breathless men, now laughing in the relief from vigilance. Steaming heads were dried, scarlet faces mopped. All began to realize that they were wet through, but there was no hurry to go and change.

" Well, if that did'na beat th' Danes ! "

" As much to-do as when they turned out th' witch-nest me granfeyther's feyther talked about."

" Aye, or th' weavers' riots."

" A proper old rondyvoo an' no mistake."

" We'n getten enough to parle about till coom next moock-spreedin'."

When the church clock struck twelve there was a general adjournment for a snack of dinner and a change of clothes.

Edgar Simmons sent his messenger for bread and cheese and beer, sat down with his back to the wall, and lit a cigarette. Idly he took fitful pictures of the monotonous combat. An immense peace enveloped him.

Ned Seedcroft and Young Lubin kept grim watch over this last scene of market-day. Their Sunday clothes were ruined. The bulls' coats, too, were filthy and bleeding. The gloss, the bloom of years of peace, had been destroyed. Ember Tom's auburn neck showed ugly clotting spots of blood where Ezra's horns had pierced the satin skin. His triumphant sparring bout had left him tired. He was now quite unable to disengage his horns. When he tried pressing forward, with a sudden desperate rally black Ezra dropped to his knees again, holding his enemy powerless.

But now, after the toil and moil of the hard-cobbled arena, after the long, unconscious journey they had been forced to take, black Ezra, too, was not quite so full of fight. His pokes were becoming innocuous.

Ember Tom was wise enough then to cease his struggles to free himself. He leaned his great weight forward in a massive passivity. Ezra held him easily without going on his knees.

The tired creatures leaned on each other, horns locked, resolute but inactive.

Was it the sweet scent of the shaven field that tempted them ? The bulls, after a motionless moment, slowly, quietly, as if sharing the same thought, disengaged themselves.

Each drew away from his opponent, gazing round as if on a suddenly discovered heaven.

Where had that dreadful place of stones disappeared to ? And where had vanished those bright colours, the loud noises, and disturbing scents of human life ?

As if waking from a dream they gazed about them.

Suddenly, with a great astonished toss of the head, Ember Tom snatched a mouthful of grass. It was a fierce, hysterical gesture.

Black Ezra did the same.

The sight of his enemy daring to feed brought Tom to his senses. With the sweet

Leaping astride the wall, Edgar Simmons shot a triumphant picture of the charging bulls, wild fragments of legs, the faces of screaming women, and topsy-turvy babies.

grasses still dangling from his mouth he lunged swiftly at the black bull. Ezra, tired and panting, was almost taken off his guard. His body swerved round to a dangerous angle. For the first time he was out of position. His horns were held, but his body was bent. No longer did his head oppose a protective front to the whole of him.

Before he could swing into the safe position, Ember Tom disengaged his horns and dived for Ezra's unprotected stomach.

Ezra swung violently aside, but his enemy's horn grazed viciously below his ribs. Blood dripped freely on to the grass. Ezra was wounded, but not deeply.

"Owe's killing our Ezra! Owe's killing 'im!" wailed Young Lubin.

"They mun feyght it out, lad, kill or no kill. 'Owd thee noise, do," said Ned, sombrely, feeling for a dry match in a sodden box.

For a few moments there was frantic loose fighting. Each bull sought to do the utmost damage to his enemy's body in free action. Blood began to flow dangerously.

With tight lips Edgar Simmons made his record automatically. But his heart beat faster and faster with the greater ferocity of the bulls.

Young Lubin bellowed unrestrainedly, wiping his wet nose and red eyes on his sleeve like a little boy.

There came a moment when Ned started desperately forward with his hayfork. The fight must be stopped or one of the beasts die from loss of blood.

Half-way across the field he hesitated. Seeking a respite from their own destructive rage the weary creatures had again interlocked. The old head-to-head engagement was resumed.

"Perhaps they've got through t' worst," he called out, consolingly, to Young Lubin. "Better give 'em a minute or two."

Mechanically the bulls pushed.

Then came another motionless pause in which each seemed conscious of tempting odours.

Black Ezra, suddenly disengaging, snatched a mouthful.

Ember Tom gazed round, swinging his tail, sighing heavily. His breath came in painful gasps. He longed to lie down on the cool grass. His racked nerves and long struggle, following the journey from Ember Farm, had made every bone in his body to ache. Hoof and horn felt like lead.

There was silence; that live country silence they knew so well.

The sweet-smelling earth was calling them to rest. Heavily, slowly, the enemies turned away from each other. It was as if they had arrived at a mutual decision to observe the rules of human combat, and rest.

Each was afraid or too proud to sink down on the grass. Panting, they stared out at the view, which, as the guide-books said of it, was extensive and beautiful.

Presently they stood motionless, not even swinging the tail. The quietness, the green vision in front of them, whatever its mysterious shape and meaning to bovine eyes, impressed its peace upon their bewildered brains. Each bull seemed to be thinking of his own quiet field at home.

"They'll not be killing each other to-day, lad," said Ned, kindly. "The smell o' the grass is quieting 'em, like. But we munna disturb 'em yet. It'd get 'em on to slaughter again."

The two men smoked, feeling friendly through relief.

EDGAR SIMMONS, his back still to the wall, consumed his lunch with that incomparable avidity of the artist after achievement. Joyful thoughts kept breaking up his towny face. Little Sam Holmes sat adoringly beside him, smoking his first whole cigarette in a beam of happiness.

Distant shouting, the sound of running, reached their ears. They were sounds that revived in the bulls the overflowing nervous fears that had flowered into the fight. They threatened to join battle once again with hysterical energy.

After midday dinner the crowd was returning. It was now a crowd augmented by wife and child. In a few moments the walls were again fully occupied by excited spectators.

Ned was greatly perturbed. The bulls might have quieted down finally had this fresh invasion not occurred. But seeing that these were the neighbours who had helped him, his manners forbade a protest. All he said was: "I'll thank ye to keep quiet, neighbours all. We'n getten good hope now of quieting 'em down."

Edgar Simmons, fed and again reloaded, came smartly to the rescue, as he could well afford to do.

"You can tell 'em I'll take all their pictures if they keep quiet. They'll be shown in London and all over the world. THE BULL-FIGHT AT CRANNIFORD."

Ned raised his cowman's voice easily.

"This 'ere young cinema gentleman says he'll take th' likeness of one and all if you ll kindly keep quiet.

"Shown in t' metropolis and throughout th' known globe," he added, at the instigation of some memory of past Wakes where he had seen fat ladies and strong men.

"Will th' picture of us be shown in Arizona as well?" whispered little Sam, ecstatically, to Edgar Simmons.

This was certainly to be the sensation of

the day. Country folk may see a bull-fight now and again, but to be made into a picture for one o' these 'ere cinemas . .

There was a tremendous rearranging of groups and figures, a smoothing of forelocks, a wiping of children's noses. The boys adopted cowboy attitudes as well as they could in such a domestic environment.

Admonition filled the air.

"Granny, take thee bonnet off, do! You'll shame us all with that cotton thing."

Edgar Simmons prevented the sacrilege. He knew what was expected of a village picture.

"Eh, but I wish I could go an' get me new 'at as I've got for t' Wakes!"

The village beauty chafed aloud, hoping the young gentleman would tell her to go for it. Instead, he said :—

"Oh, Miss Woodin, we can't have *your* beautiful hair covered with a hat—can we now?"

Sally pouted, blushing deliciously as per schedule. How did he know her name?

The men were easier. Especially those who had brought implements of warfare with them. What pose so easy as that of the countryman with rake, spade, or hoe?

At last the crowded walls were at a white heat of readiness. Edgar Simmons walked back to the point from which he had started arranging his subject, and slowly passed along with his camera at close quarters. It was a magnificent addition to the day's work.

THE BULL-FIGHT AT CRANNIFORD.
A FEW OF THE SPECTATORS.

Already he saw the thrilling caption.

All had been engrossed. No one had noticed that the weary bulls were becoming aware of untoward circumstance bordering their domain.

"What the——? Still these vulgar spectators of our private affairs? This can *not* be tolerated!"

With a mighty concerted bellow the two bulls thundered royally towards the offending masses of colour at the moment when Edgar Simmons had completed his Study of Village Personalities—the alternative caption, which had just come into his head.

With a great shout of warning from the men the scene was changed.

But the spool had not run through yet. Edgar Simmons turned to meet this fresh gift of fortune.

It was well for him that the bulls began clearing the walls at the same end from which he himself had started. Leaping astride the wall he shot a triumphant picture of the charging bulls, wild fragments of legs and petticoats, the faces of screaming women, and topsy-turvy babies, all before he neatly dropped himself into the lane when Ezra's long horns were a yard away.

LATER on, after a pot of strong tea, three eggs, and a piled-up plate of buttered toast at the King's Head, he visited Parson's Paddock once again to get a last impression under the caption of Country Peace.

In different corners of the field each bull was quietly chewing the cud of a perfect day. Under the wall, Ned Seedcroft and Young Lubin lay fast asleep under a cloud of unswotted flies.

Stealing as near as possible to the various groups, the little Cockney actually did catch something of that spirit which he sought for the completion of his great picture of the bull-fight at Cranniford; the first caption of which would run somewhat as follows :—

With no lordly matador, on a day of full summer. Absent the picaresque picador, absent the temperamental toreador, posturing in far-off golden Spain. In scenes of country jollity, with no horrors of disembowelled horses dragged shrieking from the bloody sand of the arena, the ancient village of Cranniford, in the fair English Midlands, holds its first recorded bull-fight.

At ten o'clock that night, after five hours' sound sleep in the train, Edgar Simmons drove away from Euston like one in a dream.

Within a week he was promoted in the firm. Further, his delighted chiefs, sitting in conclave in far-away High Holborn, sent a handsome bonus of ten pounds each to the owners of the bulls who had failed to get to market.

"Thee'll non go now, lad," said Ned, offering his Sunday afternoon bunch of clover to old Tom. "Thee can sit theesen down."

"Our Ezra's in all t' papers," boasted Young Lubin. "Me feyther'll never sell 'im now."

A week after that tedious, painful journey back to his dear home, after a week of Ned's care and nursing in the sweet-smelling old barn, Ember Tom again smelt the morning air and nosed the wet grasses in his own field.

His cows were not far away. He could hear the comfortable tearing of grass.

Long he stood motionless, wrapped in the warm restoring peace of habit.

Presently he was aware that black Ezra had come into the landscape.

Automatically, with peaceful hearts, the bulls began the daily ritual of challenge and anticipation.

OTHER PEOPLE'S

By

A Study in Absorption.

THERE was a joyful hot summer six or seven years ago that was a blessing to us all, and there was an artist in London who accorded it a special welcome. For it happened to be the year in which J. H. Dowd decided to specialize in making drawings of children.

In his own words, he went "spotting for children." He journeyed first into Kensington Gardens, and the long, cloudless days made it a good year for specimens—a vintage year. In the Broad Walk by that sea of adventure which is the Round Pond, and in other pleasant places which lie near, many children, with nurses or without, posed for Dowd, and never knew that they posed at all.

There was only a quiet, dark-haired man on a seat, who had nothing to do with the adventurous playtime of children except to look on. If anybody chanced to give him a look, he was writing a letter on an ordinary writing-pad. Dowd doesn't use a sketch book, and when he goes "spotting" there are no signs of the craft about him. One writing-pad. One, or more than one, pencil. The quickest fingers, and the most alert brown eyes.

Later, the writing-pads went further—to Ramsgate sands, to Brighton beach, to Cornwall. Everywhere where it was summer, and holiday, and the children were the kings of the moment. Dowd is a great letter writer, and seldom stops working, and is only satisfied with the best he can do. Again, in his own phrase, he has the drawing disease. That is all to the good, since there can be very few men or women who do not take a sincere and positive delight in the child-sketches of J. H. Dowd.

Indeed, I fancy that not a few people carry away a lasting impression of some particular Dowd drawing. It dwells with affection in the mind long after the pleasure the first sight of it gave—just as one holds and cherishes a well-loved bit of verse, the mind and thankful heart returning to it again and again.

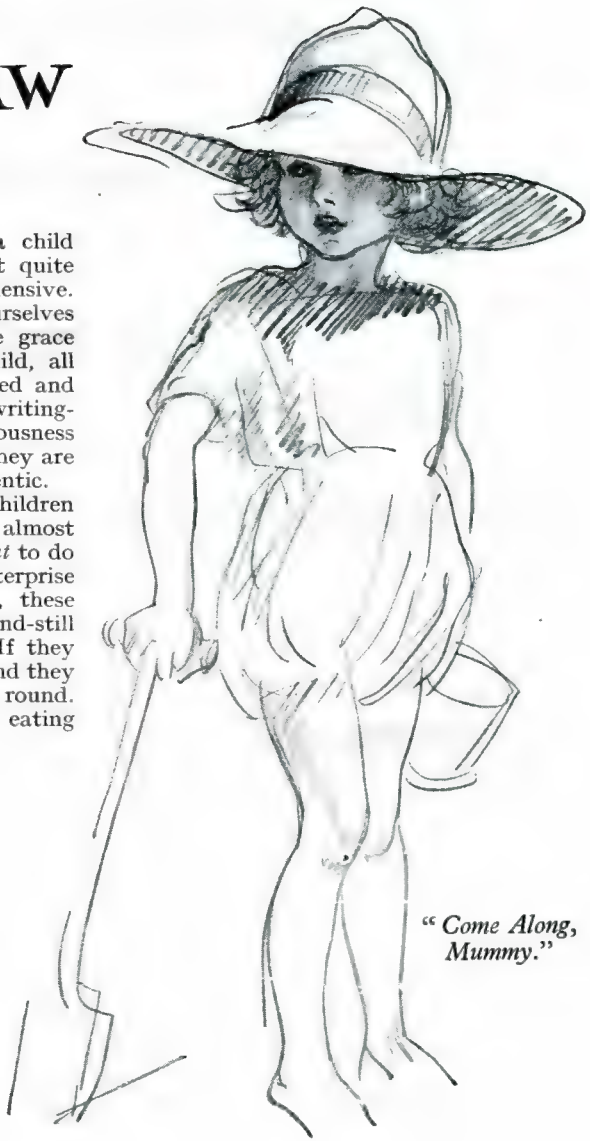
The beauty in Dowd's drawings is the beauty of truth. Thus and thus, we say to ourselves, have we seen the children

CHILDREN

HERBERT SHAW

play. Just so have we watched a child become suddenly thoughtful, or not quite so gay, or expectant, or apprehensive. These things which we have ourselves observed, which made us glad—the grace and quickness and courage of a child, all endearing things—have been captured and truly set down by the man with the writing-pad. Quite apart from the graciousness and joy the drawings convey to us, they are not to be disputed. They are authentic.

This capturing upon paper of the children at play is a swift business. It is almost lightning work. They're always *about* to do something else, to start a fresh enterprise with spade or ocean or tiddler-jar, these very-much-alive children. The stand-still age of mature years is far away. If they are bending down, the very next second they will be standing up—or the other way round. Even the absorbing occupation of eating



"*Come Along, Mummy.*"

Pictured by J. H. Dowd

Getting Down To It.

an ice cornet may be threatened at any second by a swift change of pose. Mostly, Mr. Dowd's drawings are of children in action, and the action is pleasurable. Immediate and vital, they possess enchantment because they present this or that glorious moment in a child's life.

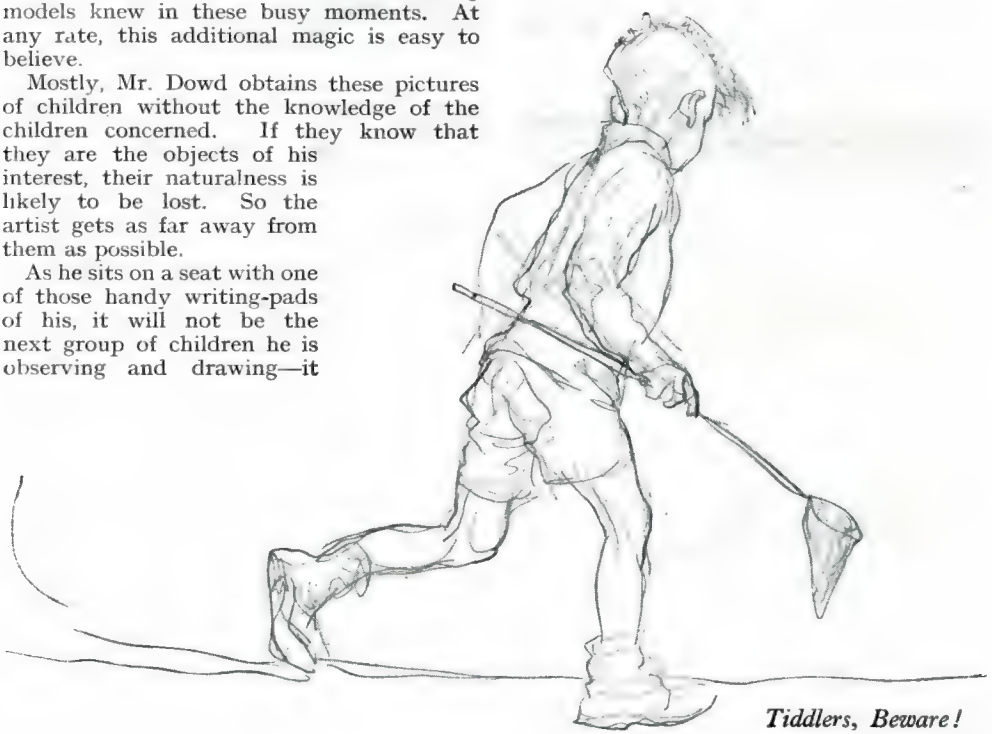
It is even possible, looking at them, that you will thrill to feel something of the interest and excitement the unwitting models knew in these busy moments. At any rate, this additional magic is easy to believe.

Mostly, Mr. Dowd obtains these pictures of children without the knowledge of the children concerned. If they know that they are the objects of his interest, their naturalness is likely to be lost. So the artist gets as far away from them as possible.

As he sits on a seat with one of those handy writing-pads of his, it will not be the next group of children he is observing and drawing—it will be the next group but one. Some distance away from him, they are less likely to discover that they are being watched.

It is the grown-ups who get in the way of his work—the curious grown-up who happens to find him drawing intently, and wants to know what it is all about, and aches to offer well-meant and friendly suggestions for better models—generally related to the curious grown-up. Dowd has perfected an efficient weapon against these unwanted helpers. When one of them lingers near, he suddenly looks up, and regards the interrupter with a look of anger and hostility that is really terrifying. The first look of this kind is usually enough. If that fails, a second and still more terrifying stare, an *édition de luxe* of what is known as a "dirty look," is effective in scaring the curious one away.

Dowd remembers allowing one interrupter, though, to stand by and watch him at his work. She was a dark-eyed little



Tiddlers, Beware!

girl. His swift pencil held her attention for some minutes before she asked him gravely : " Have you got a licence for doing this ? "

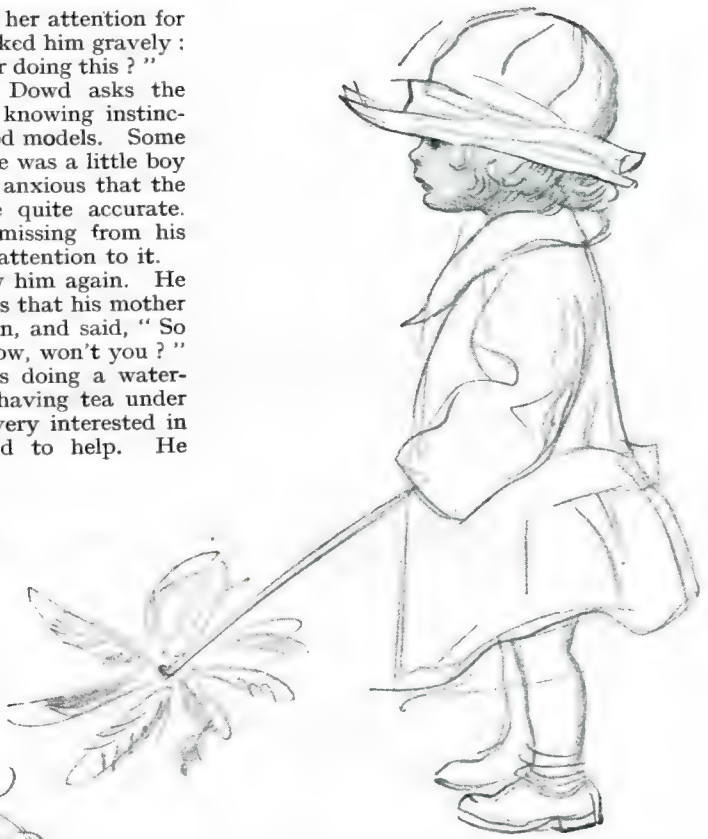
There are times when Dowd asks the children to pose for him, knowing instinctively that they will be good models. Some of them like posing, There was a little boy in the park who was very anxious that the picture of him should be quite accurate. One of the buttons was missing from his shirt, and Dowd drew his attention to it.

The next day Dowd saw him again. He ran up with the proud news that his mother had sewn a fresh button on, and said, " So you'll be able to draw it now, won't you ? "

Another time Dowd was doing a water-colour sketch of a group having tea under the trees, and a boy got very interested in his paint-box, and offered to help. He found a brush.

" Shall I put some green on the trees while you are painting the party ? " he demanded.

Sometimes children who have posed, and have disliked the business of standing still, give the artist a wide berth when next they see him. They gather their little friends together, and depart behind the trees, peeping out every now and then to see if Dowd is still there, making him feel rather like a wicked uncle.



Outlook Unsettled.

" Hurry up! I'm ready! "

His friends tell Dowd that when he is busily sketching his face wears a very severe and grave expression. Which explains why one little girl, whom he had been watching intently, suddenly turned and ran. " Oh, mummy, there's *such* a nasty man staring at me ! " she complained.

There were " rapid sketch " classes at the art school which Mr. Dowd knew a longish number of years back. He did not find them of much use to him, he thinks now. Either five or ten minutes were allowed students to make a sketch, and that is far too slow for Dowd's work. A child on the sands makes an agreeable pose. There is, according to Dowd, less than a minute available to record a first effective portrayal of that pose, and often it will not last so

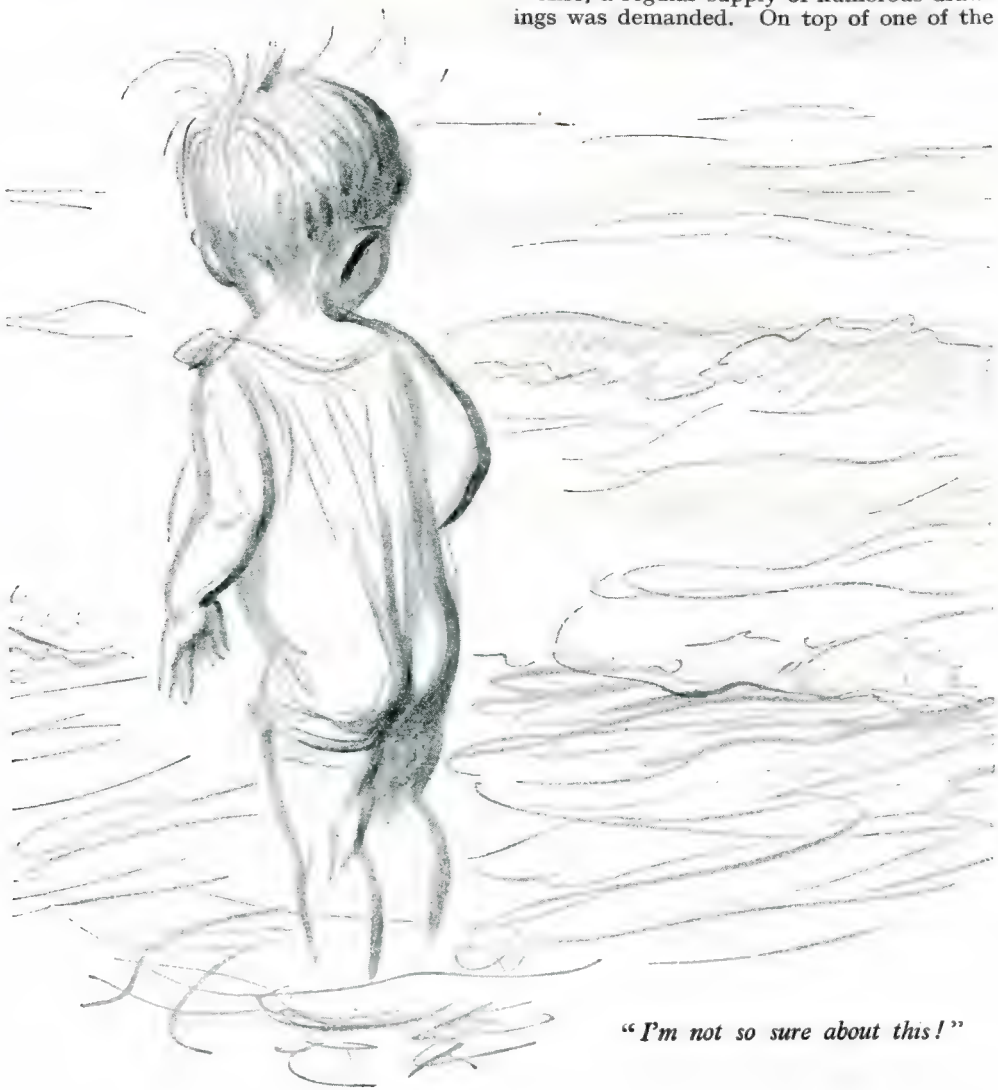
long as that. A playmate s call will shatter it ; the least happening will start a new interest on the child's part. The time of a happily engaged child is not the deliberate time that grown-ups use. It has a three hundred horse-power quality, like Sir Malcolm Campbell's Bluebird. It is on the wing.

So J. H. Dowd attained the necessary speed in his craft, not *viâ* the sketching classes, but from very many days of work on a Sheffield newspaper.

He had to go out into the world early to make his living, and he was a Yorkshireman of fourteen when he joined the art staff of that paper. It was not till a long time after that he felt himself able to do the work he liked to do. But those years of hard and steady work—providing anything up to a dozen or more sketches a week—at portraying, for daily papers, every aspect of the life of a big city, sport, social, municipal affairs, helped tremendously to make him the quick and vivid draughtsman that he is.

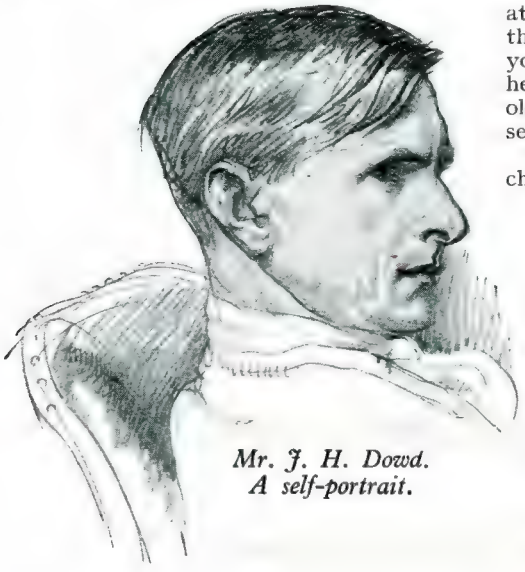
In his work for the evening newspaper there was never any time to waste. Dowd did a lot of sport pictures. At twelve he would be on the cricket ground. Three sketches (with ideas attached) to do for that night's issue ; and, with that job of work done, he must be back at the office by half-past two.

Also, a regular supply of humorous drawings was demanded. On top of one of the



"I'm not so sure about this!"

They that go down to the sea!



Mr. J. H. Dowd.
A self-portrait.

public buildings of Sheffield there is a representation of the god Vulcan. Dowd appropriated Vulcan in his classical attire, and made him appear as a character in a long series of sketches illustrating the city's activities. Vulcan appeared at banquets, at theatres, at meetings of the Council, always full of benign common sense, with the right word to say.

Only lifelong study could have given Dowd's pencil the fluent and spontaneous touch which gives the feeling of life and movement to these sketches of children. His genius seizes the essential line to convey the action and expression of a fleeting moment, and his work has a magical surety and ease.

Swift as the laughing gleam that dances in a child's eye is the faultless stroke which captures for ever some careless rapture, some glorious attitude, born for no more than a moment, yet secured for all time by Dowd's art.

All the simplicity, carelessness, and charm of children are in Mr. Dowd's pictures of children, and all the naturalness, too. Not for him little Sunday saints in Sunday clothes and Sunday manners, but the rough-and-tumble, rompered little kid who takes his fun where he finds it, and finds it good.

It is not easy to annoy quiet and observant men who are masters of their job, and there is only one question which really annoys J. H. Dowd—when people ask him what made him begin to draw children.

He doesn't know. He paid no special attention to children as subjects during those long years in Sheffield. He says you might just as well ask any artist why he draws the things he does—flowers, or old people, or landscapes, or ships and the sea.

Perhaps he visualized the matter as a challenge to his skill. Children are not

Fancy That!

very easy subjects to draw—you can't get away with slurred or indifferent work. He is very keen on etchings now, works at his etchings after he has done a full day's job. We hope he will keep the children in them. There's a gaiety and abandon about the big family of J. H. Dowd children that warms and lifts the heart.

Dowd certainly knows children, and draws them because he likes them. The appeal of his work is universal, and there will always be a welcome for the gay and vivid family of other people's children his pencil creates for us. His work is always alive, as a happy child is alive. In comparison with studio photographs, or with set paintings of children, his sketches seem as poetry to prose.

It will surprise many people to learn that Dowd is a bachelor. He is a happy bachelor, a wise and observant bachelor—his work is proof of that.

And though he does not often draw them, his work has led him to study parents as well as children. He thinks that many parents make too much fuss of the little ones. He is emphatic in his conviction that too much attention ruins a child's naturalness.

" I never like to miss an opportunity," he says, " of imploring modern parents to moderate their transports about their offspring. It is all understandable and natural. But in these days of one or two children to a family, obviously they get attention which, in the more normal, larger family, would have to be divided.

" They get, in many cases, overloaded with care and attention. In my observations out and about I see so many instances of this. I visualize the young victims trying to live down, with pain and shocks, the distorted and selfish idea of importance that has been foolishly instilled into their minds. Mentally they will find it hard to recover from the pampering which is often lavished on them."

" For their sake," Dowd advises parents, " don't do it."

To which, of course, all right parents will immediately answer: " Thank you for nothing, Mr. Bachelor! You're perfectly right in what you say, of course. It may be true of other children—but not of ours."

" Shrimps! "

THE SCOOP

By B. L. JACOT

Illustrated by OAKDALE

GILFORD stopped his taxi at the corner of the road, out of sight of the square. Across that historic residential square he could see, as he paid the driver, a group of people hanging restlessly round the portico of No. 57. In the blue light from the arc lamps slung high among the trees planted a hundred, two hundred years before, the reporters resembled terriers—highly trained and expensive animals—watching at a badger's earth—from the outside. A grim smile twisted the lip under his professionally close-cropped moustache.

His business was at No. 57, and these were the folk he had to avoid. That part was easy: a telephone message had been sent to the house, and arrangements had been made. When a big news story breaks, and the Press rises clamouring as one man, sending out its wiliest and best to bribe, cajole, or strangle something exclusive out of the break, confidential arrangements have to be made.

Turning away to the left, Gilford disappeared quietly into the shadows of a cobbled alley, once a mews. A manservant, his livery covered in a raincoat, was waiting for him at the end, and Gilford paused under the other's flash-lamp to be recognized. The manservant touched his hat. "This way, sir," he said, and Gilford passed through the gate he unlocked into the gardens beyond. The French windows of No. 57 were unfastened, as arranged. Gilford passed into the house.

The mansion was in darkness, a dead house—furniture shrouded in dust-sheets, carpets rolled back, pictures stored. A stale smell hung over everything as Gilford's torch probed its way surely from room to room towards the main staircase. In the wide hall he left his hat and stick, and, peeling off his gloves, sighed as he tossed them on to the table. The old man, true to his reputation as an eccentric billionaire, had kept the house shut for years, and, now that he was dead, it seemed the old place was to be opened up again. Keeping an ear trained for sounds that would tell him the servants had already arrived, Gilford shook his head critically to think how swiftly that uncertain rumour, arriving, it seemed, in the City some time that afternoon, had been converted into headline news.

The hint of the existence of a legal son and heir for old James J. Carpenter, the crusted bachelor—revealed by this alleged will of the old man, who at eighty-seven had still controlled more than one half of the world's copper at its source! The good story of thirty-six millions going a-begging for want of an heir was gone, killed by rumours of the will, the secret marriage half a century ago to an actress, by the untraceable report of this unsuspected James J., junior, arriving at No. 57 that evening from somewhere in Florida—Florence—'Frisco, some had it.

In the library, one storey above street level, Gilford stood at the window. The crowd round the porch below, waiting for a limousine to arrive, made him smile. These newspaper men would try to storm the door; magnesium flares would puff for the cameras. They would not get much! Drawing the heavy curtains, he switched on the lights, then, pulling the dust-sheets from an easy chair, he sat down and lit a cigarette. It was a pity, he thought, no one had arrived yet.

The crowd of newspaper men round the porch below, waiting for a limousine to arrive, made Gilford smile.

And then, suddenly, he became tense. The cigarette clenched between two fingers, he sat stiffly forward in the chair. The door stopped opening; the head of a young man slipped through the crack.

"Why, hello! I didn't hear anyone in here——" It was a cheerful face, apologetic. "But I saw the light. This house gives me the creeps, anyway——"

Gilford laughed. "You made me start, young fellow!" he reproved. "Is that the way you usually enter a room? Pushing the door inch by inch? For the moment I thought ghosts, or something—— By the way, who *are* you?"

The young man, struggling to get his collar back on the stud, threw his soft hat on the table and approached the task with two hands. "I'm beginning to think I may be anyone, but I happen to have been sent by the General Hospitals Almoner — by arrangement with old James J.'s lawyers, Messrs. Simmons, Simmons, Yates, Ventnor, and Yates. It's like this——"

"Yes, yes!" Gilford was drumming his fingers. "My firm. I am—er—a partner. The affairs of the late—ah—our late client were largely in my hands. So you are the representative they sent? Well, well! An unfortunate business for your hospitals, Mr.——"

"Reid. William Reid. Yes. You bet we're pretty sick. We understood the bulk of the estate was coming our way. I expect, though, the old man left the hospitals a fair slice, son or no son?"

The older man shook his head, smiling professionally over the bridge of his arched fingers. "One hopes so. One hopes so, indeed.

You seem to have met with some—ah—difficulty in gaining access to the house ? "

Mr. William Reid smiled good-naturedly. " Difficulty is right ! The Press representatives out on the doorstep there resented my trying to approach the house. Pulled me about a bit." He fingered a torn overcoat and ran a hand through his dishevelled hair. " I got in through the garages at the back. The servant who lives over the place there fixed me. I never got within feet of that front-door bell ! " He paused. " I thought the house was empty, anyway. That I'd arrived too soon, or something."

" The servants have not arrived." The older man seemed abrupt. He eyed the visitor for a while reflectively. " An unusual way of entering a house," he stated at length. " But, perhaps, in the unusual circumstances you were to some extent justified. The newspapers——"

Turning from the mirror over the handsome Louis XIV. fireplace, Reid clicked his lips. " You were lucky, sir, to arrive before the gang collected. Outside, now——"

" I observed them a moment ago."

SATISFIED now as to his personal appearance, Reid sought permission to light a cigarette. " You can't blame these fellows," he excused. " Old James J. had been the nation's favourite billionaire for fifty years. He was always news—as they call it. So secretive, retiring. Think of all the stories about him. A library full ! Then he dies and leaves about thirty-six million, with copper let loose, so it seemed, for anyone to grab. No wonder this bombshell about the secret wedding, and this James J., junior, went off with a bang ! Everyone is waiting for news, and there is none at all. Only rumours. You bet the news-editors have to try to collect something ! "

" Quite." Gilford found this young man's enthusiasm embarrassing ; he hoped his manner did not show that he would have preferred to be alone. " You seem to be singularly well informed."

The young man laughed quickly. " There are rumours going about enough to inform a regiment ! Besides, the newspaper folk have been trying to get information from us continually since four o'clock—that was when the news trickled through. Funny how it gets about——" For a while he held the lawyer's eye appraisingly. " I suppose there is more in all this than rumour ? In your position, sir, you should be able to——"

" Able to realize my position."

A faint tracing of colour spread over the other's cheek. " Of course ! I m sorry—I did not imagine——"

Gilford held up a finger commandingly. " What was that ? " Both strained through the silence of the deserted house to catch a repetition of the scraping that had sounded below.

" Rats, maybe," suggested Reid.

" I thought it was the servants." Gilford consulted his watch. " They are late."

" Then—they're coming ? Opening the house after all these years ? That must mean the rumour's true ! "

" What I said does not mean anything. Anything at all." For a nervous moment the older man drummed his fingers. " Your committee, you will remember, telephoned my firm in respect of these rumours. Am I right ? Yes. The permission we accorded was for you to visit this house this evening so that you might protect your position as supposed residuary legatees. Is that not so ? "

" That's right." The young man seemed relieved. " I'm sorry I keep getting ahead of myself. I——"

He broke off short as the sound of a discreet knock on the door caused him to jump half out of his chair. It was the older man who spoke first.

" Come in ! " Gilford's voice was shaky. The old house, dead for so many years, mouldy-smelling, and eloquent of decay, had affected his nerves. A young woman entered the room, well-dressed, more than pleasant to look upon, but obviously more than a little scared.

" Mr. James J. Carpenter ? " she inquired, fixing the lawyer doubtfully.

" His legal representative." He rose to his feet as she approached. " You have business with my—ah—client ? "

For a moment the girl caught and held the eye of Reid, turning from it to meet Gilford's query. " Well, yes. Mr. Carpenter, I understand, is expecting me. He engaged me by wire this afternoon as a temporary secretary. Social Services, of West Street."

" By wire from where ? " Gilford's voice was engaging.

" Southampton. The telegraph office in the Customs sheds. His instructions were definite. Eight-thirty this evening—but it seems——"

" The servants are late," Gilford told her. " Mr. Carpenter has been delayed. I am not in a position to say how or why. Indeed, I am not in a position to know how or why." He pulled himself up short. " How on earth did you get into the place ? "

From under the snug brim of her close-fitting hat she smiled at him, more at home now. " You may well ask me that. Outside on the pavement——"

" Yes, yes ! The Press. I have seen them."

"I'm sorry you don't like the sound of it, Mr. Gilford," said the reporter. "But you can't take back what you have already said. We have a certain amount to make a splash with in to-morrow's papers."

" Anyone who looks as if he were going to turn into the porch——"

" They jump on him, eh ? " suggested Reid, smiling.

She met his smile squarely. " They do. The idea seems to be to get hold of Mr. Carpenter when he arrives—if he does—by force if necessary, and compel him to say who he is, what he is, where he came from, and what he is going to do."

" And I'll bet," added Reid, " they'd like to do it ! But I don't expect they have a dog's chance. Just making nuisances of themselves."

" They certainly frightened me ! "

Gilford broke in on it. " But you haven't said how you got in, Miss——"

" Gaynor, from Social Services. I had to try to find a back way in."

" Back way ? "

" Why, yes. I thought Mr. Carpenter was in from the light up in the library here——"

" The light ? " The older man looked round at the curtains, and Reid followed his gaze.

" I saw it from the street, and I thought Mr. Carpenter would be annoyed if I just went away because reporters——"

" You were quite right. I am glad you came in. A back way ? This is very extraordinary."

" A servant in the garages at the back let me in through the gardens—— Will he get into trouble for it ? I never thought at the time——"

" He seems," stated Reid, " to have been having a busy evening. But I expect he knows his job. Mr. Carpenter will have quite a reception party waiting for him, and no servants. Perhaps it's just as well."

GILFORD produced his gold cigarette case and offered the girl a cigarette, which she declined. " The servants are arriving from the country estate. Arrangements—ah—have been hurried and perhaps inadequate."

" What time do you expect Mr. Carpenter ? " The girl was removing her gloves. " I suppose he will arrive to-night ? He surely has had time to motor from Southampton ? "

To these questions the lawyer shook his head. " Information such as I might be able to give is, it appears, at a premium. In circumstances such as these one cannot be too careful. Buyers are too—brisk in the market, shall we say ? A little leakage, and the gentlemen of the Press will be with us all night ! "

" But surely——" The girl, avoiding the eye of Reid, seemed disappointed.

" Mr. Carpenter's man of business," explained the young man, " is in a peculiar position. You surely appreciate that ? "

" And I am in a peculiar position, too." Turning her shoulder on the lawyer, she faced the man from the hospitals. " Here am I, supposed to meet Mr. Carpenter—a man with all these rumours about him—and I cannot be told when he is coming, if he is coming, or who he is, or what I have to do, or what it's all about."

" I can tell you this," said Gilford, glancing at his watch. " Mr. Carpenter was to be here at seven o'clock this evening. As he is now nearly two hours overdue, I may say that he will not arrive here to-night. If you call again in the morning at nine-thirty sharp, I undertake to say that he will be expecting you. You had better leave now—both of you."

For a moment Reid and the girl exchanged a glance : it seemed they understood each other. " But—my committee——" began the young man.

" Your committee was acting under licence from us," pointed out the lawyer. " There is no end to be gained in waiting longer."

The girl turned to him appealingly. " But, Mr.—Mr.——"

" Gilford."

" But, Mr. Gilford, surely I am entitled to know who this Mr. Carpenter is ? After all, I am to accept a confidential position with him. With all these rumours *Is* he old Mr. Carpenter's son ? Is that will in existence, really ? What I mean is—was old Mr. Carpenter really secretly married in 1884 to this actress, and——"

The lawyer's manner had stiffened. His lips were tight-drawn. " Beyond what I have said, I have nothing whatever to say." He shot a piercing glance at Reid. " Information on this topic is affecting the markets. You are aware of the ramifications of our late client's activities in the financial world. Do you imagine that I am likely to divulge casually information which has a high market value to——"

" Wait a minute ! " Reid waved a hand, moving closer. " Mr. Gilford, I may as well——" He shot an inquiring look at the girl. " We may as well get this all straight. I guess we have to apologize for fooling you. Miss Gaynor and I happen to be two of the lucky ones who had the brains not to wait outside in the cold."

" Reporters ? " The lawyer recoiled from the word, badly shaken.

He inclined his head. " Nancy Gaynor here and I paid our way in at the back. Nancy is the star lady of the *Tribune*. I get sent out when anything worth-while breaks, from the *News-Herald*. Both of us, it seems, were struck by the same idea about that coachman fellow at the back. My news-

editor fixed him by telephone. I expect it was the same with Nancy."

Without taking her eyes from the horrified lawyer, she agreed. "When I walked into this room," she supplemented, "I had the shock of my life to see Bill Reid here. I might have known, though, he would have got in ahead. I thought for a minute he had collared this Mr. Carpenter all to himself!"

"But—I never——"

"And when I saw Nancy trip in," laughed the young man, "believe me, I thought the pitch was queered. But we fixed the show. We both had water-tight alibis, anyway. Well, there it is, Mr. Gilford. What do you say?"

"I think," spluttered the lawyer, "it's—it's disgraceful! I'm not sure it does not constitute a burglarious entry. Preposterous! I must ask you——"

"Wait a minute!" Reid held up his hand. "Don't imagine you would get far trying to prosecute a national daily paper, Mr. Gilford! But you'd know better than that. I've spilt the beans with a reason."

"And the reason?" The lawyer's voice was cold.

"Here it is. Nancy and I have got ahead of the crowd. As we're streets away the smartest pair, you'd expect it. We represent the two leading papers, and maybe we could split the story." He fixed the ceiling. "Our papers, Mr. Gilford, pay very high prices for exclusive news——"

The lawyer drew a deep breath. "You are suggesting you bribe me—too?"

"Well—why call it that? High payment for exclusive news. All the world is waiting for it. You have it. No one will know. Take it in cash if you don't like a traceable cheque. It's all the same to us. Well?"

GILFORD cleared his throat. "Young man, and, I take it, young woman. Your suggestions are infamous. If you expect an answer, I will give it. I will have nothing to do with it. You have not heard the last of this. I advise you to get out. Before I telephone to the police."

The girl caught at Reid's sleeve. "Come on! Let's go."

"Wait a minute!" The reporter shook himself free. "I'm sorry you don't like the sound of it, Mr. Gilford. But you can't take back what you have already said. We have a certain amount to make a splash with."

"And that is?"

"Mr. Carpenter is expected here to-night. There *is* a James J., junior; the house is being opened up; there *is* a will, or you wouldn't be here; he has wired from Southampton for a secretary——" He hesitated. "Or is that a tale, Nancy?"

"Invention," the girl admitted. "My alibi. Sorry."

"Go on, Mr. Reid. Print all that. You were after facts. It seems you have them ——"

Reid considered. The lawyer was right. He had nothing. He did not know who this Mr. Carpenter was, for a start.

"Look here, Mr. Gilford. As a man of affairs. The sub-editors are going to print something to-night. That's sense, isn't it? Something *has* to go into print. We can't miss a break like this. Surely you see that? Well—all they can go on is what I will have to tell them back at the office when I get in."

"I see that," condescended Gilford.

"Well! Listen, Mr. Gilford. What Nancy and I have now is nothing! We don't know a real thing! What will appear to-morrow will be good guesswork. Punk. Think of the harm it will do. Why not give us a few facts? Discreet as you like. Give us something—anything. Will you now?"

The lawyer hesitated. "Oh, please, Mr. Gilford," pleaded the star reporter from the *Tribune*. "No one saw us come in. They won't see us go! It means such a lot to us!"

"Very well." The lawyer collected himself. "If you will solemnly undertake to leave the building—and take your—ah—colleagues with you, I will give you some official facts for publication——" Two pencils flew over two note-books. "Our late client, Mr. James J. Carpenter, was—ah—connected with a lady on the stage over a long period of time. The name is Alice Huntingdon, at present residing in the State of New Jersey—the township of Culver. Five children were born of the—ah—alliance. Three sons, two daughters. The will about to be proved divides the estate into seven portions: two to the mother, one each to the children. The eldest son, now to assume the name of James J. Carpenter, is bequeathed control of the copper interests, and he will personally take this up, re-opening this house and entering the social life. That is part of the will. Mr. Carpenter will not be here until to-morrow. Up to the present he has been engaged as Postmaster of Culver. That is all."

On the face of Reid as he scribbled his hieroglyphics was the rapt imprint of one who is collecting news-pearls beyond price. Miss Gaynor, too, was telling herself that all this could not be true."

"And you can vouch for it—as Mr. Carpenter's lawyer?"

"I will, of course, take no payment, but my name can be used as authenticating the statement. I was, in any event, authorized to make the facts known to the Press sooner or later. And now, perhaps——"

"The name of the firm?"

"Messrs. Simmons, Simmons, Yates, Ventnor, and Yates." Gilford took pleasure in rolling off the title of the international firm. "And now——"

"Just a minute, Mr. Gilford! This lady. When——"

A cough sounded from the doorway. A young man with a gimlet eye, soft hat, and the unmistakable aroma of high-speed printing stood in the pink radiance from the shaded lights. "Well, gentlemen?" he inquired.

Reid snapped his book shut. "Say

"Say nothing!" shouted the reporter to Gilford. "He's one of the crowd from the doorstep who has wormed his way in."

nothing!" he yelped at Gilford, then turning to Miss Gaynor. "D'you recognize him?"

"He looks familiar," she admitted. "But I couldn't swear to it."

"What—what is this?" stammered the lawyer. "Another——"

"Say nothing!" shouted Reid. "He's one of the crowd from the doorstep who has wormed his way in!" He strode over towards the intruder. "Get out! Get back on the other side of that door!"

"Look here! I want to know——"

"You bet you do!" Reid laughed. "Unless you want me to start something, get a move on! This session is strictly private."

Turning his hat in his hand, the stranger looked from one to the other. Reid was a powerful young man, and to give point to the urgency of the moment he had taken up a fire-iron from the old-fashioned, open grate.

"Well—just as you please, gentlemen!" the stranger said, and, turning back through the door, he closed it after him.

Tossing the fire-iron into the fender, Reid

tucked away his note-book and buttoned up his overcoat. "That's fine, Mr. Gilford," he said. "Thanks and all that. I must be getting down to see to the boys on the step. Give them some sort of yarn to get them back to the office for the early editions—before any more make their way up. Coming, Nancy? Good night!"

As the door shut behind them, an odd activity took the lawyer. He jumped for the telephone, registering satisfaction at the click that told him the line was connected. He gave a number, then waited. A voice came from the other end. "That the *Courier?* Give me the night editor." Gilford fingered his tie. "Listen, Jimmie! I've been sitting in this shack all evening. Got in the back way, as arranged. Nothing happening! place shut up: dead. Not a sign. No servants. Nothing. Take it there's not a thing in the story. Yes. Leave it. Let the other papers make fools of themselves." He chuckled. "The matter? Just laughing. Listen, Jimmie! My alibi here in case of trouble was so good it took in a couple from the *Tribune* and the *News-Herald!* I didn't know them, but they knew each other. They took me for the real stuff—and I handed the dope out to them. Official! Did they? You bet they did! It'll take two generations to live down the story I gave them. Right! I'm coming along now—same way out as I came in."

DOWNSTAIRS, in the servants' hall of the house in which he had been born, the young man in the soft hat, with an authentic look of the reporter about him, was sitting with his valet on a table—in the dark. "Reporters?" young James J. Carpenter was laughing, good-naturedly. "I'll say they were! When we skipped that gang on the doorstep I imagined we were safe—but they had me cornered up in the library, if they'd only known it! Ah, well! Give 'em time, and maybe they'll fade away. The bunch at the front door seem to have moved on, anyway." Reaching out a hand in the light of his torch, the legal heir to millions hooked the vacuum flask and poured himself a drink of hot coffee. "If you try to live out a private life like the old guv'nor planned for me, side-stepping the mystery-probers is part of the game—but I hope these folk upstairs get paid by results, not by the time they put in. Some time to-night, Henry, you have to find me a bed here. Here's wishing you luck."

ACROSTICS

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 216.

ONE called the other black, proverbial pair,
Look in the kitchen, for they may be there.

1. A touching picture, see beside the bark
   There stands a man, a fellow small and dark.
2. Ten times his leader did the leader lead;
   The leader leaves—at heart found false indeed.
3. Relations in an alien tongue we find,
   A stone of help brings one of them to mind.
4. Select a town hundreds of miles away:
   A colleague of a shellfish, may we say?
5. 'Tis not itself beside a battlefield;
   And, rearranged, a monster is revealed.
6. "Thy glorious constancy appears so bright,
   I dare not meet the beams with my weak sight."
7. Mix place where dwelt a man of saintly fame
   With patriarch: curtail the daughter's name.
8. The absent part is whole, and, truth to tell,
   Double the absent part is whole as well.
9. About the man, born eighteen twenty-eight,
   Who wrote some books—can you his birthplace state?

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 216 *should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor,* THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on July* 10*th.*

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 215.

THE first, as warm becomes the year,
May in your garden reappear.
The last will gambol, quite at home,
Amid the sunny summer foam.

1. From two extremities combined
   The very best you here may find.
2. Metal and note of bird must be
   Mixed, and this river now you see.
3. Called gentle, maybe to assuage
   What might have been a righteous rage.
4. Poor substitute you here behead,
   Top-hole is what appears instead.
5. Castle in fiction fair enough,
   The greater part is turgid stuff.
6. To this add head and tail, and make
   Something not much unlike a cake.
7. An island, Cockney might indeed
   Thus state identity of steed.
8. When someone else looked back upon
   Her, on the instant she was gone.

W. J. B.

1. T	ipto	P
2. O	rinoc	O
3. R	eade	R
4. T	op-ga	P
5. O	trant	O
6. I	ncep	I
7. S	amo	S
8. E	urydic	E

NOTES.—Light 2. Iron, coo. 4. Stop-gap. 5. Rant. 6. Mincepie. 8. Orpheus.

BEYOND ALL REASON

By F. H. SIBSON

Illustrated by MACKINLAY

SPLENDID with golden lights, her three great funnels towering dimly cinnamon into the blue-black velvet sky, the *Countess of Lothian* swung at her effortless twenty knots through the star-dusted Pacific night. Chartered for a world pleasure-cruise, she had left Honolulu two days before, *en route* for the South Pacific and its storied islands.

In the smoking-room the usual casual argument was in progress. This typically manly pastime is one that most ocean travellers learn rapidly to take up—and bless. A liner's smoking-room without its habitual debating circle would be almost unthinkable.

The young man in the unobtrusively elegant tropical evening dress stretched himself lazily in his leather-covered armchair.

"I consider," he observed to the company in general, "that another little drink wouldn't hurt any of us. There's just time before lights-out. And then," he added, "you can elaborate this theme of yours about the equality of the sexes." He had turned his head sideways a little, and was regarding Masters with a faint glint of friendly amusement in his quietly assured eyes.

He could afford a certain assurance, this heir to the Bransdon millions; and that without need of ostentation. The Bransdon treasury was as impeccable as the Bransdon lineage. It was the latter which had given him his manner, not the former; wherein is a difference—and no subtle difference either. Young Bransdon never had to remind himself of *noblesse oblige* and the "things which no fellow can do." He believed in the code of his caste as the ordinary man believes in wearing clothes—without need of conscious thought.

Masters was older and of a different type. One saw this in his face, for he was burned and lined and made prematurely middle-aged by the exactions of his calling. Except for a few brief periods of leave, he had never been more than a few incidental miles north of the Tropic of Cancer for nearly fourteen years. His last big job had been in Egypt—something to do with a new dam; and it seemed strange that he should have chosen this round-the-world voyage as recuperation. The fresh green of English fields and the softly cloud-flecked blue of the English sky should surely have called him too imperiously for denial. That call must indeed have been powerful—until another and even stronger one had overborne it.

"It's against all reason, I say," Masters resumed, after the glasses had been filled and raised. "They want it both ways. Of course, I know all this must be old stuff to most of you, and you've got so used to the paradox that you hardly notice it any more; but to me, coming out of cold storage, as it were, in places where time has been standing still pretty well since it was supposed to start, into a world where everything's been turned upside down in a twinkling, the thing's simply glaring."

"But," asked Bransdon, keenly, "doesn't the respect and—er—chivalry that we have for women go deeper than any mere matter

of votes and 'careers for girls,' and all the rest of it? A woman doesn't cease, biologically, to be a woman because she's flown an aeroplane to Australia. Apart from proving that she's equal to learning the trick of flying, all she's done is to show that she's got pluck. And the fact that the human race didn't die out after the first child was born is proof enough of that. I say the respect that a woman receives in all decent-minded lands is founded on biological fact and biological necessity—and you'll never alter that."

"Ah!" objected the engineer, "but aren't you forgetting that while the woman's facing up to her biological necessity there's some man who's got to fight like blazes to carry out *his* job of feeding her? Where's the difference really? We don't all face physical hardships and dangers. But there's such a thing as mental strain, you know—and I'm not sure it isn't worse than the other."

He paused for a moment, as though remembering the weariness and stress of helplessness that he had himself endured (it had nearly driven him insane) in the building of that Egyptian dam—amid a degree of corruption and intrigue and blandly-smiling obstructionism which could never be even imagined by any who had not known it at first hand.

"I DON'T mind," he went on, "opening the door for a woman if she's going through it to take up her ordained work—but I'm hanged if I see why I should open that door when it only leads to a dance-hall. See what I mean?"

"In a way," answered Bransdon, "but to my mind there's no getting away from the fact that a woman's a woman. It isn't my fault if she's—from your point of view—a slacker; and it isn't my place to inquire."

"Rule of thumb," commented Masters. "It doesn't matter much when it's just a case of opening doors—but what about emergencies of life and death? A man may be the greatest scientist or doctor or statesman in the world, but if there's only one place left in the last boat—he's got to stand back and drown while some fluffy-haired little doll who isn't worth tuppence to anybody—— What I mean is, why can't people be judged on their real value, apart altogether from the mere accident of their sex?"

There was a silence; and one or two of the listeners showed signs of shock as the implications of what the engineer had said were borne in upon them. An ex-military gentleman from India shifted uneasily in his seat, tugging at his white moustache, obviously on the edge of explosion. The situation was saved by an elderly, rather red-faced man in the corner near the bar. He was not really a member of this debating coterie. His presence was neither welcomed nor resented. Rightly or wrongly, they had put him down as "Army boots."

"Hang it all, you've got to have some rule, you know," he pointed out now. "Imagine, say, the sports committee having to make up its mind, on the spur of the moment, about who was worth saving and who wasn't! Or would you have the list made out before the ship sailed? Upon my word *I* shouldn't care to sit on that committee!" He laughed loudly.

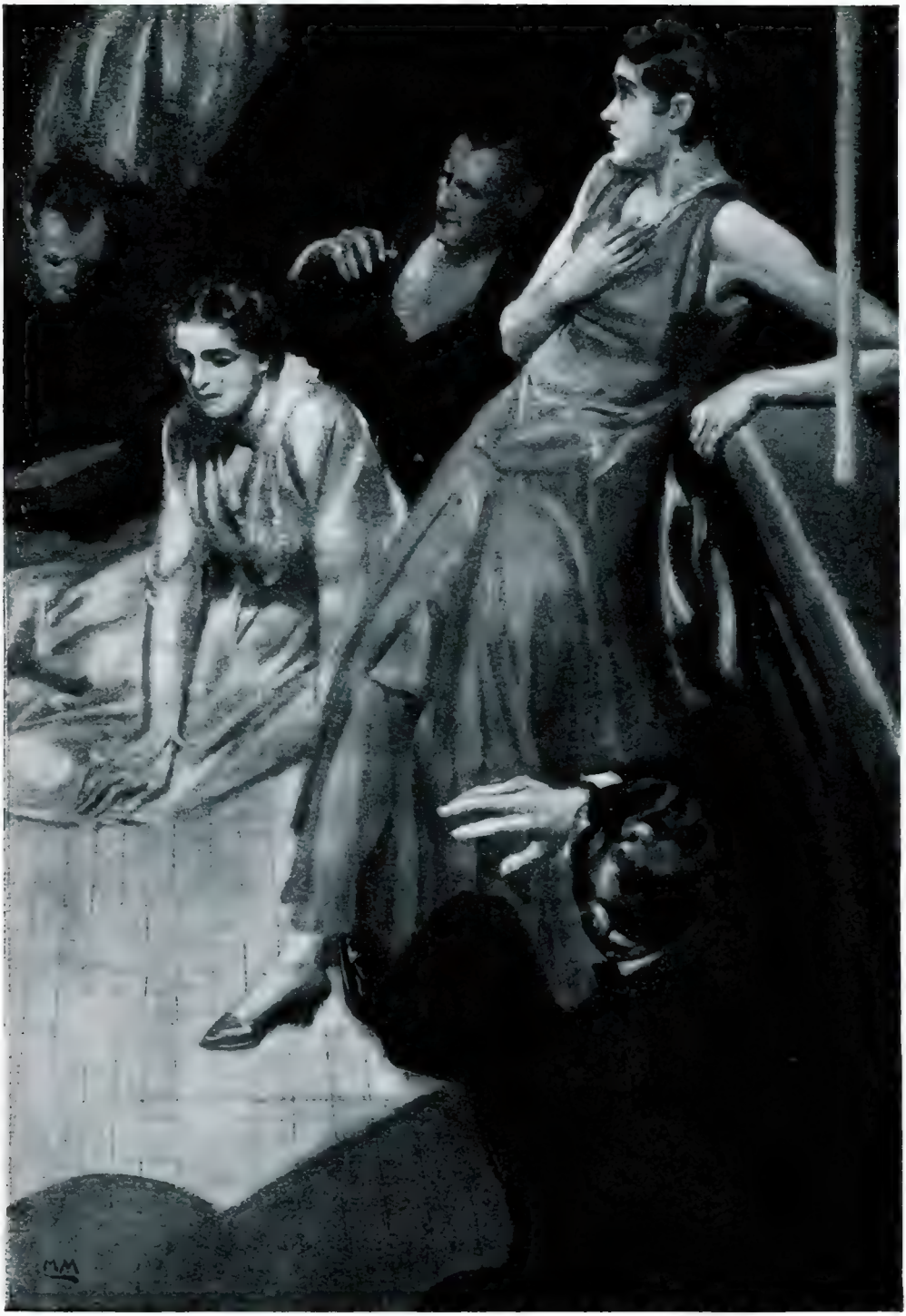
"It doesn't affect the principle," argued Masters, joining good-naturedly in the laugh. "Well, good night, everybody. I expect I've talked enough rot for one sitting. I'm probably wrong too, but one's got to get up an argument about something on a trip like this!" The last was spoken, with a pleasantly-disarming smile, from the door.

"Poor old chap!" grinned the red-faced man. "I don't suppose he really believes half that stuff he's been chucking at us. Fact is I think he was rather gone on Miss——" He checked himself, remembering in time that one does not mention a woman's name in a smoking-room. "On one of our younger set," he substituted. "Noticed it the first day. But the poor old boy's such a back-number that he hadn't a hope from the start. Hence his misonigy—mis-ogyny."

Nobody made any comment. It was charitable to assume that the man had drunk perhaps a little more than was good for him.

Bransdon did not betray, with the slightest flush, the fact—well known to everyone present—that he and Miss Sunningdale had become inseparable ship-board companions before the *Countess of Lothian* had even reached Madeira. By now their partnership was recognized as a matter of course; and very fitting was that partnership. So formidable was their deck-tennis combination that they had come out easy winners in every tournament. They danced together as though inspired by the selfsame spirit. Even in the concerts they were not divided; her warm contralto blended to perfection with his full-throated baritone. Together they went ashore at all the glamorous ports of the liner's call. "An ideal match," was the universal and inevitable comment.

"A sterling good sort, old Masters," said Bransdon, the generosity of a conqueror mingling in his manner with the reticent restraint of his breed to form a clearly implied rebuke to the person who had last spoken. "I don't know what we'd do



The dancers on the promenade deck were flung helplessly forward.

without his type. And logically I suppose what he said was perfectly correct. Only —man isn't altogether a logical animal."

"Fortunately, perhaps!" snorted the ex-military gentleman from India. His fierce eyes swept the room. "'Pon my soul, I shouldn't like to live in a world ruled by that sort of logic! These engineers seem to think they can solve everything with their damnable *x* and *y*! You were too lenient with the fellow. Much too lenient!"

He went stiffly to the door.

"Good *night!*" His voice dropped an emphatic half-tone on the second word.

Bransdon sat back in silence. A faint shadow had settled on his face. Certain of the words that Masters had spoken repeated themselves disquietingly in his mind. Was Iona one of those women who had passed by the door of marriage for that of the dance-hall? Was that why he had to content himself with her comradeship—when he longed for her love?

"HULLO, Masters! Why aren't you doing heel-and-toe with the others?"

It was the chief officer, a square-built man with sandy eyebrows and hair just beginning to turn grey at the sides. He had come down from the bridge to find Masters standing at the foot of the ladder, a cold pipe in his hand, looking out into the night. The engineer started slightly at the other's abrupt greeting, then smiled deprecatingly.

"Rather out of my line, I'm afraid. Thought I'd leave it to the younger ones. . . . You've a pretty useful band, though, I must say!"

The ship's officer listened critically for half a minute to the stamping blare of the jazz. It came battling up for'ard against the wind of the vessel's motion, like the distant tumult of another planet, insistently intrusive; an incongruous noise to hear from this deserted space under the bridge. Here nothing was to be seen but sea and sky, with the dark, silent wedge of the fo'c'sle between. One felt the presence of great and immanent forces, symbolical of an entity beside which the pigmy noises of puny man at his pleasures seemed impious and urchin-like.

"Not too bad," agreed the officer, "as they go. Personally I'd rather listen to a bit of music, even on the gramophone."

"Oh, so would I!" was the answer, delivered with perhaps just a shade more emphasis than was quite normal. Masters would not have minded any amount of jazz—if only he could have been dancing to it with Iona Sunningdale in his arms. But that, as he had long since realized, was a joy that could only mean needless pain. It was bad enough that his absurd hopes should have lured him on board at all. Why hadn't he chucked it and gone home by the first ship available—and forgotten her? He could have caught that Matson boat easily at Honolulu.

But he could not leave her. He knew that just as clearly as he saw the pathetic foolishness of it. It made him writhe in his very soul. He was chained. There was that within him which, unreasoning, insisted on his keeping near her—but not too near now. He could not be expected to bear the constant sight of her obvious happiness—with the all-sufficient Bransdon.

It might have been a little easier to bear if some of his secret ache could have been transmuted into the usual jealous hatred of his supplanter; but his honest mind could not be brought to hatred of young Bransdon. On the contrary, it was impossible to help liking him.

"We've got some rather good records," proceeded the chief officer. "Care to come along?"

"Thanks very much," replied Masters, fully sensible of the proffered honour. Only the chosen, the inner *élite*, the exceptionally favoured among passengers are admitted to the messroom and friendship of a liner's officers.

Masters never saw the officers' messroom; never heard their gramophone.

The thing that happened came with no more warning than the dropping of a bomb from Mars.

The ship had run out of the south-east trades into the "variables" to the south'ard, wherein the winds may blow from any direction or none. That night was calm and cloudless, with the merest breathing of swell. If the weather had not been so perfect there might have been hope. As it was, not a suspicion of broken water marked that coral shoal ahead. The sea looked as clear and safe as the chart proclaimed it to be. The Pacific is a big area, which cannot be surveyed with the all-inclusive detail of an English estuary. Year after year that four-fathom patch had lain there in wait, unknown and unsuspected by the shipping which must have passed many times within a mile of it. Now the hour of its revealing had come; and the *Countess of Lothian's* bows proclaimed it—with a shock as though the world reeled to its end.

At twenty knots—thirty-three feet per second—with all the irresistible momentum of eighteen-thousand headlong tons behind them, those bows struck, crumpled, lifted a little, and went grinding on and over amid a boiling of smashed coral and outleaping breakers of dirty foam. The lacerated

plating buckled and was planed off the ship's bottom; the water spouted in on the instant, tumultuously snarling tons of it into her before ever the men of her had sucked in their first breath of dumbfounded horror.

The dancers on the promenade-deck were flung helplessly forward. A heaving heap of them lay against the for'ard rail there, with the uniforms of the bandsmen all intermingled. On the bridge the third officer clung weakly to the binnacle, fighting to overcome the breath-taking pain of his chest. (He had been driven against one of the iron compensating-balls of the magnetic compass, and had three ribs broken.)

The engineers below had crashed and slid on their slippery footplates. Incredulous-eyed, the watch-officer—who lay jammed half under the control-platform rail—saw a gush of grey and filthy steam shoot in from the stokehold door; heard the screams of scalded men even above the ship's own gigantic death-rattle (and it rang and echoed like close thunder down there). It was a matter of a second.

"If you move a step towards the boats I'll brain you," rasped the old Anglo-Indian.

"I'm not moving, thanks," said Masters, and eased the half-stunned company director to the deck.

As the first of the water surged scummily over the plating, the officer dragged himself to his feet and shut off the steam. He leapt off the platform then, and went struggling through the deepening water under the grim compulsion of an urgent duty. The boilers must be blown down at once, their choking pressures released up the escape-pipes, ere they released themselves and blew the superstructure of her to ragged ruin. Mechanically he continued to struggle, even after the roar of the escape-valve should have told him someone had acted already—and saved eight hundred lives. The subdued note of the oil-burners ceased. The fires were safe. The engineer swam now in the swirl, was washed with numbing force against a ladder. He seized it and climbed like a bewildered, half-drowned animal. About him others swam and climbed. The lights went out.

" We seem to have hit something," said Masters, stupidly. From the tail of his eye, as he sat on deck with his hands to his rocking head, he saw the chief officer crawling on hands and knees towards the bridge-ladder. At its foot he swayed upright, put his hands on the rails—and was tossed aside by the captain, a terrible figure in his crumpled evening mess-uniform, with a broad splash of blood down his shirt-front.

" Soundings for'ard — midships — aft ! W.T. doors ! Wireless ! Boat-stations ! " shouted the captain as he climbed. His voice held only a mere suspicion of unsteadiness, and that was excusable enough.

Masters pulled himself up and stood, supported by the rail, all his faculties concentrated on the effort to calm his staggered brain. He could feel the rail trembling against his back—or was that the quiver of his own nerves ? All about him had sprung up a chaos of noise, of cracking human voices mingled with other and more portentous sounds : a grinding from aft, as of colossal teeth, where the reef worried and held the stern in its jaws ; a shudder of inpouring water underfoot ; great gulpings of expelled air ; and over all the tearing uproar of escaping steam. The deck had swayed perceptibly over to starboard, the lights vanished as though slapped out simultaneously by some invisible hand of blackness ; for a few seconds he could see nothing at all.

He was aware of calls and orders and answering shouts from and to the bridge overhead ; a shrill pipe and a command, repeated everywhere by stentorian voices :—

" Boat-stations ! "

At first it did not occur to him that the order included the passengers—himself. Orders were only given to the crew on board a liner. He was a spectator, interested and queerly calm now—probably numbed a little. He would have to do something presently, he knew that ; but for the moment he could not make his body act.

" No bottom at twenty-five fathom, sir ! " came in a weird, high hail from for'ard. On the heels of it a voice near by cried : " Deep eighteen ! " He did not hear the report from right aft. It could not carry through the blended din. A running figure appeared for an instant, shooting up the bridge-ladder.

" Quarter less five aft, sir ! " it bellowed gustily.

Now just what did all that mean ? Masters flogged his brain into coherent activity. Deep water for'ard and amidships ; shoal right aft. The ship was held by the stern, with nothing to support the rest of her. She had driven right over the reef, then ; must have wrecked nearly all her bottom. Watertight compartments could be of no use ; they must all be opened to the sea, except perhaps one or two of the after ones. In a few minutes, perhaps even seconds, the planking on which he stood must be submerged. It sagged down to starboard ever more steeply—the water on that side must be very near already. Ye gods, what a list ! She'd break off at the stern presently.

SOMETHING like a long, whitish spider slid down an invisible web to starboard, filled with dim things that moved. A flood of light burst from somewhere overhead ; and in the blaze of that flare he looked upon the distorted faces of women, with the set features of seamen showing here and there among them and a graven form in uniform overlooking all. Then the thing slid down out of sight, to reappear in a moment floating free, the oars straddling out like waving legs. The first of the starboard boats was away.

That galvanized him. He ran up to the hurricane-deck, to become one of a strangely silent crowd which stood solid, with no more than a periodic surge to shake it slowly, like an undercurrent playing among dense seaweed.

" Women to starboard—men to port ! " came a deep megaphone-augmented voice from the bridge ; and the throng swayed and parted, murmuring. Some of the women cried out as their men left them.

Why this ? Masters' brain was tremendously alive now, and he saw the reason in a flash. The port davits were useless : the angle of heel made their handling impossible. All boats would have to be launched from the low-squattering starboard side. That meant the starboard boats must be got away first, ere the others could be

(perhaps) manhandled across the decks. Abandoning ship must take twice the time, then—and time was immeasurably precious. The women first—deference, respect, chivalry. At least, a working plan.

He found himself one of an entirely male audience, stilly watching a scene of incredible activity. Officers ran here and there through the uncertain, bewildered cram of blank white faces and torn ball-dresses. It seemed impossible to pick out individuals in that mass; and he longed with heart-wrenching intensity for a glimpse—just one last glimpse—of Iona. For himself he had no fear and little regret. Not much point, after all, in living on without her. He had tried not to think of that, for the vista of life had stretched very drearily before him. So meaninglessly futile it had seemed.

He was sorry for Bransdon, though. Tough on the boy to lose her like this.

SOMEONE was dragging at his arm, a half-hysterical voice yelling in his ear.

"It isn't right—it's against all reason!" gibbered the elderly man who in the smoking-room had been red-faced. "Remember what you said—that night! Why should we stand aside while those women get clear away? Rush 'em, man—rush 'em! Give us a lead! I—I'm worth more'n half a million—give work to thousands—why should I die? They'll never get *our* boats out before she sinks. She's going *now!* Come on—oh, come *on!*" This last was a despairing shriek. Masters stood disgusted, immovable, his feet planted wide against the demented creature's pull.

A fist took the fellow on the side of the head.

"Stop that!" commanded a harsh, military voice. "Pull yourself together! And you, Masters!" rasped the old Anglo-Indian. "If you move a step I'll brain you."

"I'm not moving, thanks," said the engineer. He eased the half-stunned company-director to the deck, and held him there lest he should slide away down the increasing slope.

"Oh! So you think differently about these things now, do you?"

"Let me up! Let me up!" screamed the man on the deck. The flare-light beat on his bald head and made it look strangely pathetic.

"I'm not thinking at all!" snapped Masters. "This is no time to think—or quarrel. Help me hang on to this lunatic!"

The employer of thousands broke suddenly free, clawing up to his feet. He swallowed twice, his face screwing itself to a form of stillness. He straightened, as though about to address one of his own Boards.

"Since the feeling of the meeting is obviously against me," he said, with the queer, stilted dignity of the deranged, "I beg to withdraw my resolution." Stiff-legged, he walked to the dizzy starboard edge of the deck, dodged between the bows of a boat and the end of the rail between it and the stern of the next, and hesitated on the point of the jump. Masters lunged and seized his leg as though in a football-tackle, dragging him back.

"Don't be a damn' fool!" he shouted.

"Spark of decency at bottom!" commented the colonel. "Ashamed of himself. Bit theatrical, though. I've seen 'em go that way before. He'll be all right presently——" He cut himself short, realizing suddenly that there would probably be no "presently" for any of them. "Why the devil is she holding up still? There'll be room for some of us in the next boat. All the women are away now except those few."

Masters scanned their faces, and his heart leaped and stopped and leaped to life again. Iona stood among the huddled group, waiting while the seamen swung one of the inner starboard tier of boats to the launching position. Her eyes shone almost black from her whiteness, with an utter agony of soul: she stared right into his face. He wondered whether she saw him at all in that blank and stupefied gaze.

Now she no longer looked at him; she was following the figure of an officer who moved forward towards the men. It was as though she watched, rooted, while a nightmare was enacted. The still terror grew upon her, till she stood like a stone statue, frozen by its intensity.

"Alphabetical order!" shouted the officer. "A's and B's step forward; remainder form yourselves in alphabetical order, fore and aft!"

"That's fair," commented someone with judicial serenity. "About the only way they could do it." His own name was Wilson.

But Iona Sunningdale swayed back against the rail as if a bullet had entered her.

Bransdon was among the first batch to be ordered forward—to fill the boat in which Iona had now been placed. He hesitated, stopped, looked longingly into the face of the woman he loved—but who had been able to offer him only comradeship in return. *His* face was very white and strangely controlled. He had seen the hope die from her eyes at that shouted order; he saw now the direction of their despairing gaze—saw and understood.

"Hurry up, Mr. Bransdon!" cried the officer in the boat's stern-sheets; but Bransdon ignored him, walking straight up to Masters.

"Here—you get into that boat!" he urged quickly, without preamble. There was no time for preamble. Masters must surely know.

"Come *on* there!" from the officer; "or we'll have to go without you!"

"There's a reason!" insisted Bransdon. "I needn't say it. She'll be under long before they reach the M's. Take my place and good luck to you—both. I—I'm not really keen——"

Masters stared; uncomprehending, dumbfounded.

Iona had started up and stood watching, one hand on the gunwale to steady her, the other clenched tightly over her heart. Her eyes were dilated now with an awful suspense—born of dilemma still more dreadful.

"Sit *down* in the boat! Your hand'll be taken off——"

"Number Seven!" boomed the bridge-megaphone. "Lower away, Number Seven! What the devil are you waiting for?"

The hurried vehemence of the order was underscored by a premonitory shudder of the dying hull underfoot, a heavy water-logged lurch, a wash of brine which licked up and along the deck.

"Slip! Shove off!"

There was no need to lower away. The boat floated from the davits as the falls unhooked.

And Masters looked on her whom he had once dreamed of as wife. Her little figure showed dimly in the failing light of the flare. As it went out, another blazed from the chart-house roof. He saw her plainly then—and cried out incontinently in the stabbing poignancy of that final, all-revealing vision. She was looking back at *him*—not at Bransdon—and it was as if they two, alone in all space, were being dragged apart by all the demon cruelties of hell.

The boat swung end-on and she was hidden from him. He turned blindly away. He understood—now.

"You fool! Oh, God, you damned, dull fool!" raved Bransdon, shaking him

furiously by the arm. "Did you think I gave up my place for *your* sake? Did you suppose I'd be cad enough to think you'd *take* it for your own sake? Hell, are you blind, that you couldn't *see?*"

"*She's going!*" came in a yell from somewhere, confirmed by the captain's roar: "Every man for——"

"Here—you get into that boat with her," urged Bransdon. "There's a reason. I needn't say it. Take my place and good luck to you—both."

The words were bitten off. The ship had swung sickeningly under them, her port side rising slowly from the sea, her other flank settling sluggishly. For a few seconds there was a silence so intense that the strokes of the oar-blades overside were clearly audible.

"No, by God, she isn't!" shouted the captain. "Stand fast, all! Stand *fast!* She's steadying, she's righting herself! She's holding *up!* . . . All boats stand by!" he thundered over the sea; then turned to his chief officer and continued—in a voice that shook uncontrollably with the shock of a vast and undreamed-of relief. "God bless this calm," he said, "and pray it holds till the *Leicestershire's* here! It's the air in her fore-holds, Mr. Wellman. We've no cargo to speak of, and unless the hatches blow off the air'll hold us. And *they're* steel! The stern's hard and fast—she won't slide off. We're safe as long as the hatches stand. The buoyancy's bound to leak away slowly, but it gives us time enough to get everyone off her, anyhow. You can lower away the port boats from their own davits now. She's practically on an evel keel again. . . . *She's* all right—she'll last out—dear old lady!" But this last was spoken to himself—in a broken whisper—so that no one else should hear.

Masters would not have heard if the words had been shouted in his ear. Because, standing very erect and still, Masters was giving thanks to his Maker for his life—and for that which he had seen, in the last agony of their mute farewell, in the eyes of one from whom, now, there would be no parting.

A TOUCH OF ROMANCE

By

DANA BURNET

Illustrated by DUDLEY TENNANT

ONE evening in the late autumn I started out to drive to Portsmouth to the movies. Portsmouth is twenty miles from the Maine village where I have my summer home. I had been busy all day closing the house, rolling up rugs, covering furniture, sprinkling camphor and cedar over everything. It was a prosaic business, and I felt I needed a touch of romance.

So I got in my car and headed south along the new state road that has brought modern prosperity, and other hideous things, to Maine. I hadn't gone far before I saw a man walking along the edge of the road; a thin, slouching figure in khaki trousers and an old sweater, with a curiously jaunty cap on his head.

He glanced back over his shoulder, saw me, and jerked his thumb forward with that familiar gesture of the lift-cadger known to all motorists. I stopped at once. I had already recognized him.

"Hullo, Perley," I said. "Where you going?"

"Goin' to Portsmouth," said Perley Ball.

"So am I. Get in."

He climbed into the car beside me. "How a' ye?" he said, acknowledging in the clipped native phrase the fact that we were friends. He was indeed a neighbour of mine. He lived across the meadow at the foot of my hill, in a house that squatted, at an odd angle, on foundation stones laid in seventeen hundred and something. He was about thirty years old. He was married and had three children. His wife wasn't strong. He supported his family by doing odd jobs about the village; jobs that it was difficult to get other men to do, such as cleaning out clogged cesspools. He was not a stout man, but he was tough and wiry, and had a kind of boyish inner recklessness that led him to tackle anything.

Some of the more respectable villagers considered him a godless fellow (he had been in the navy) and shiftless beyond hope. But I had heard him, mornings when the birds woke me, chopping wood for his wife's fire, splitting up dead branches and old stumps that he had walked the Lord knows how far to lug into his back yard. Why pay for wood when Nature is bountiful?

Sometimes he got drunk and quarrelled with his wife. Then he would take to the woods and be gone for perhaps two or three days. On one such occasion he came back with a great bunch of Mayflowers for her. Another time he walked five miles to a spot in the pine forest where he knew he would

find a certain herb, a tiny root called "gold thread," which has beneficial medicinal properties. His wife was ailing, and he couldn't afford a doctor.

He had no money, and apparently needed none. I often envied him.

"Were you thinking of walking to Portsmouth?" I asked him, as we drove along through the early-lowering twilight.

"I cal'lated I'd get a lift."

"Going sporting, Perley?"

"No. I'm goin' to fight a feller over there to-night."

"Fight?"

He hung on the ropes, completely defenceless, while Hawkins pounded him with both hands.

"Ey-ah. There's to be some bouts over at the Athletic Club, and I'm fightin' in one of the preliminaries. Feller named Hawkins. Big chap. I've seen him. He's been fightin' for three years."

I was surprised at my neighbour's unexpected pugilistic propensities.

"Didn't know you were a boxer, Perley."

"I ain't. But I've been in plenty of scraps in my time. I can hit hard, I'm tough, and my wind's pretty good. I run a mile and a half this mornin' to see how 'twas."

"And it's all right?"

"Sure. Gimme a cigarette, will ye?"

"Better not smoke before the fight."

"Oh, 'twon't make no odds. I ain't scared of that big bruiser."

I pulled out a packet of cigarettes and we lighted up.

"Are you going to be a professional fighter, Perley?"

"No," said Perley.

"Then why are you fighting to-night?"

He gave me a quick glance, a shy, crooked grin.

"Tell ye," he said. "The feller that's puttin' on these bouts, he promised me twenty-five dollars to fight Hawkins. That's why I'm doin' it. For twenty-five dollars. I git the cash before I go into the ring."

I was more surprised than ever. The idea that Perley Ball needed money, or desired it, was mildly astonishing. I was curious to know what had put this materialistic ambition into his mind.

"Well," I said, "it seems to me you're taking a good deal of risk for the money. If this man Hawkins is an experienced boxer, you may get hurt."

"I can take it," said Perley. "I've been in plenty of scraps. I can take it."

"He may cut you to pieces," I said to him.

Again Perley looked at me, sideways, with that crooked grin of his.

"I got to have twenty-five dollars," he said.

I wanted to ask him what for; but I didn't. Somehow I felt that such a question would have been an intrusion, a prying into some secret he did not wish to reveal.

"How's your wife, Perley?" I asked.

"She ain't been so smart lately. Seems like she sort o' dreads the winter comin' on. Said the other day to me, said: 'I ain't got no courage to face the winter, Perley.' And then, the kids bother her."

"I'll bet she's worrying about you to-night."

"She don't know nothin' 'bout this," he said quickly.

By the time we reached Portsmouth I had decided to give up the movies, whose net yield of romance is always doubtful, and go to see Perley Ball fight the professional Hawkins. We drove to the Athletic Club; I said good-bye to my neighbour at the door, wished him luck, and went in and bought a seat. I was fortunate enough to be able to get one at the ringside.

There were three preliminaries of six rounds each. Perley's was the third of these bouts. His opponent, judging from the remarks of the local boxing fans around me, was a favourite with the crowd. I heard a pimply-faced youth observe loudly that Hawkins would murder "that hick from Maine."

The first two bouts dragged to their uneventful conclusions. They were "waltzes." The crowd booed, and when Hawkins entered the ring there were cries for action. Hawkins, a husky, well-conditioned youth with a flattened nose and the unmistakable symptoms of a cauliflower ear, clasped his hands and shook them vigorously at his admirers. He was a professional, all right.

WHEN Perley Ball entered the ring he was greeted with shouts of derision. I didn't blame the crowd. Perley wore, in lieu of boxing trunks, a pair of faded blue bathing drawers much too large for him. His thin legs stuck out of them like broomsticks, and his body looked grotesquely stringy and frail. I began to be really afraid for him.

He caught my eye and grinned. It was, I thought, a worried grin. But his nerve was all right. He paid no attention whatever to the jeers of the crowd.

The bell rang for the first round. Perley came out of his corner like a flash, caught Hawkins with a clean right to the jaw and knocked him flat. Hawkins was up in a moment. So were the spectators. There was a roar that shook the building.

A moment later the roar became a shriek of frenzy. For Perley, his pipe-stem arms going like flails, had knocked Hawkins down again. This time the favourite got up in a fury, rushed at the human windmill before him, and shot a hard left to Perley's mouth. My neighbour went back on his heels, shook his head, spat out a tooth ("He hasn't many to lose," I thought) and returned to his pugilistic threshing. Just as the bell sounded he floored Hawkins for the third time. The crowd went wild.

Young Mr. Hawkins sat in his corner looking grim. He looked very grim. His second whispered something into his cauliflower ear. The fighter nodded, scowling.

As they came out for the second round I noticed that Perley was breathing hard. I regretted the cigarette I had given him.

But he started off again at his killing pace, evidently trying to score a knock-out before he caved in.

Hawkins was boxing now. He stood back and let Perley swing at him. He clinched and wrestled with the smaller man. Then suddenly, in a neutral corner, directly above where I was sitting, he drove a terrific right into the pit of Perley's stomach.

It was a fair blow. There was no doubt of that. But it was cruel; and utterly paralyzing. Perley went back against the ropes. His gloved hands groped for their support. He hung there, his head rolling completely defenceless, while Hawkins pounded his stomach with both hands.

I could see the look of agony on Perley's face. I jumped to my feet and yelled: "Stop it!" The crowd took up the cry, and an instant later the referee stepped in and shoved Hawkins aside.

Perley's limp body slipped gently to the floor. He rolled over and lay unconscious at the edge of the ring. There was no use counting him out. Hawkins unquestionably had won.

Two men carried Perley to the dressing-room. I followed them. They put him on a cot, and one of them poured water on his head out of a bucket. I wetted my handkerchief in the bucket and wiped the blood from his lips. "I'm a friend of his," I said. "I'll see that he gets home."

Perley opened his eyes and looked up.

"How a' ye," he murmured weakly. Then a sudden fear showed in his glazed and staring eyes.

"Gimme my trousers!" he said.

"You can't get dressed yet, Perley."

"Gimme my trousers! I put that twenty-five dollars in my pocket, and I want to see if it's still there!"

I drove him home at midnight. He sat beside me in the car bent over, suffering, his left arm hugging his belly. But his right hand thrust into his trousers pocket, clutched the meagre fortune he had fought and bled for that night.

Some days later, walking along the village street at dusk, I met Perley coming out of Dr. Wynne's house. It was a cold autumn evening, with more than a threat of winter in the air.

"Hello," I said. "How are you, Perley?"

"My stomick," he said, "still pains me some. Didn't want to go to the doctor, but the woman, she made me. Doc. says I got to have treatment." He looked up at me with his twisted, toothless grin. "Odd thing," he said. "I reckon the doctor's bill 'll come to just twenty-five dollars."

"So you're going to spend what you earned by fighting," I said, "on getting over the effects of the fight?"

"No, I ain't," he answered. "I already spent the money on what I wanted it for. Come along with me, and I'll show you what 'tis."

I WALKED home with him, to his crazy old house in the meadow at the foot of my hill. We did not go into the house. We stood at one of the living-room windows and looked in.

There, in a shabby, barren room that once had been the pioneer Balls' best parlour, Perley's wife sat in a chair before a table on which was a small wireless receiving set. She sat bolt upright, her eyes closed, a faint smile on her thin lips, listening to a voice that came softly crooning out of space:

"As in the days of chivalry,
I swear by heaven about you,
Your brave and faithful knight I'll be,
Because I love you."

The voice came out to us standing in the chill twilight with a golden, mournful clarity. Its sentimentality was lost in the bleak dignity of the earth already congealing under the high frosty stars; it became a note of tenderness brooding over that lovely meadow.

"Second-hand set," said Perley, "but it works good. Belonged to Jim Horton, the 'lectrician. Jim wanted twenty-five dollars for it, so I set out to get the money. Cal'lated the woman'd enjoy it, 'specially now that winter's comin' on."

I didn't say anything. I was thinking of the night of the fight, and the look on Perley's face as he hung limp on the ropes with Hawkins pounding him in the stomach.

"Your brave and faithful knight I'll be,
Because I love you-u-u."

Perley pressed closer to the window. His eyes shone suddenly in the light.

"There!" he said. "Ain't that beautiful?"

"I think it is, Perley."

"It's a good set."

"But look here," I said to him. "You've still got to pay the doctor twenty-five dollars for putting you right."

He stared for a moment longer at his wife sitting in the house listening to the song. Then he looked around at me and grinned.

"Got that all fixed," he said. "Made a bargain with Doc. Wynne to-night. I'm goin' to pay him by diggin' him a nice, new drain."

PERPLEXITIES

1,059.—SEASIDE ANAGRAMS.

In each of the following sentences you will find that three words (which come together) are capable of being "anagrammatized" to form the name of a seaside resort in England or Wales.

1. After years of work in the lab. he discovered a new gas.
2. Why take a taxi with a tube so near?
3. What! I live in an army hut? O, no!
4. In a farm near by, he bought fresh eggs and rich cream.
5. This place is deadly dull and no mistake.
6. He writes the kind of story in which the victim is knifed, shot, or put away in some other equally violent manner.

1,060.—UP OR DOWN?

The historic leg-pull in connection with the fish and the bucket of water, variously attributed to the sardonic James I and to his more frivolous grandson, is too well known to bear repetition. Let us, however, follow the august example—with a difference. The following is a perfectly straightforward question:—

A man wishing to dispose of a quantity of scrap-iron, conveyed it in a boat to the middle of an enclosed piece of water, say a reservoir, and quietly dumped it overboard into deep water, where it would be completely hidden. How did this action affect the level of the water? Did it rise, or fall, or did it remain the same as it was when the iron was in the boat?

1,062.—THE COUNTRYWOMAN'S EGGS.

A countrywoman came to town with eggs to sell. At the first house where she called, she sold half her eggs and one egg more. At the second house, she sold half her remaining stock and two eggs more. At the third house she sold half of what she had left and three eggs more. She now found that she had disposed of all her eggs. How many eggs did she bring to town?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

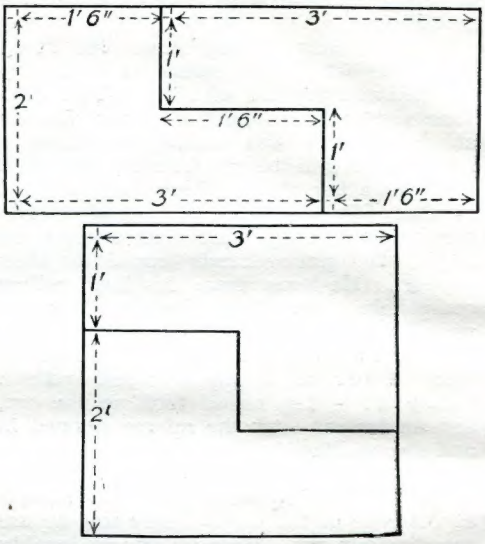
1,052.—A DEAL IN DIAMONDS.

The total cost of any number of diamonds is the sum of the series 1, ½, ¼, 9/8, 27/16, 81/32 .. .. , where any term in the series (after the first two) is obtained by multiplying the previous term by 3 and dividing by 2; and the number of terms is equal to the number of diamonds purchased. Simple calculation shows that when there are seven terms in the series, the sum of them is between 11 and 12 times the first term. Therefore the merchant purchased seven diamonds.

1,053.—THE DISHONEST PUBLICAN.

If the cask contained x gallons, the first operation left $x-7$ gallons of wine and 7 gallons of water. In the second operation, $\frac{7(x-7)}{x}$ gallons of wine are drawn off, and $\frac{49}{x}$ gallons of water. After the second operation, therefore, the wine left in the cask was $x-7-\frac{7(x-7)}{x}$ gallons, whilst the water was $14-\frac{49}{x}$ gallons. Knowing that these proportions are as 25 to 11, we have an equation which enables us to find the value of x. This value is 42. Therefore the cask contained 42 gallons.

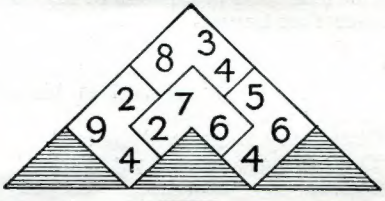
1,054.—THE CARPENTER'S PROBLEM.



1,055.—A NUMERICAL DEMAND.

The answer is DIVIDE. The first "D," representing the Roman numeral for five hundred, refers to the poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade," *i.e.*, The Six Hundred. The rest explains itself.

1,056.—ARITHMETICAL GEOGRAPHY.



1,057.—SQUARE CUBES.

The numbers are 1, 2, 3 and 4.

1,058.—THE LENGTH OF THE TRAIN.

The clue to this problem lies in the fact that when the guard heard the first stroke of five the length of the train was between him and the clock.

The last stroke of five, leaving the clock at 29⅕ seconds after five, caught up the guard at 30⅕ seconds after five. So he was then 1 sound-second away from the clock. (We are told that he was 1⅖ sound-seconds away from the clock on the first stroke.) Now, while the guard was listening to the clock striking, the train travelled for 28⅘ seconds. If we divide the time in the ratio of 1⅖ to 1, we get 16⅘ seconds as the time it took the guard's van to reach the clock, and 12 seconds as the time it took the guard's van to get from the clock to the position where the guard heard the last stroke of the clock. But we are told that the engine took 12 seconds to reach the bridge. We have now shown that the engine was as far from the clock when the guard heard the first stroke as the guard's van was when he heard the last. From this it follows that the length of the train was the distance which would be covered by sound in the difference between 1⅖ seconds and 1 second, or in ⅖ seconds—which is 440 feet, the length of the train.